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Constructions of neoliberal hegemony: An ideology critique and critical discourse analysis of neoliberalism in the late 20th century.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BRICs Brazil, Russia, India and China. (This Acronym now often infers other countries in a state of rapid development such as Nigeria, Mexico, Indonesia)

CMP Capitalist mode of production

EU European Union

GCS Global Civil Society

GEG Global Economic Governance

IBRD International Bank for Reconstruction and Development

IEA Institute for Economic Affairs

IMF International Monetary Fund

IPE International Political Economy

IR International Relations

MPS Mont Pelerin Society

NIEO New international economic order

RPCT Rational and public choice theory

SIACS states in advanced capitalist societies

SRA Strategic relational approach

STAMOCAP State monopoly capitalism

TCC Transnational capitalist class

TNC Transnational Corporation

UN United Nations

US United States

WTO World Trade Organization

Abstract

This thesis examines the role of ideas in relation to institutional change. It develops a critical constructivist analysis, drawing on neo-Gramscian political economy perspectives in IR, in order to understand how ideational factors such as beliefs, values and interests intertwine with material factors in order to understand processes of institutional transformation. It argues that ideology and hegemony, concepts sometimes associated with a structuralist position, can be usefully re-invigorated by introducing them into a socio-cultural constructivist analysis. The critical elements of the Marxist/Gramscian legacy and its strong credentials in analysing the development of capitalist social forms and modes of production provide its key contribution. Constructivism on the other hand can act as a corrective to the structuralist tendencies of some historical materialism as well as offering new methods of analysis which emphasize the importance of ideational and cultural factors. Following a discussion of the idealism/materialism and structure/agency dichotomies, the thesis argues that a discourse-historical approach presents a fruitful methodology to interrogate the transformation from Keynesian social democracy to neoliberal deregulation, privatisation and monetarism during the closing decades of the twentieth century. In addition, analysis of how neoliberal discourse represents those agents who oppose or question its fundamental principles and policy prescriptions gives an insight into the way in which a dominant discourse remains dominant in the face of growing evidence to counter its claims.

Ch. 1 Introduction: Globalisation, Neoliberalism and Institutional Shift

Introduction

It is almost universally agreed that we are living in an age of globalisation, even if disagreements regarding the extent, significance, potential, direction, temporality, spatiality and even the reality of such a process are almost equally universal. The huge scope of the debates across the academy, and indeed public discussion, means that we can only attempt one very narrow slice of analysis at any one time. This work is an attempt at such an incision. Here I will introduce the main themes of the thesis, outline the research questions and begin to map out the ontological and epistemological positions which situate the research in a particular body of literature that informs the research methodology. It is worth stating briefly before proceeding further that this research adopts a critical normative approach to global politics which draws chiefly on constructivist and interpretivist developments in social science but also on a number of neo-Marxist concepts and categories such as hegemony and class.¹ Indeed, neoliberal ideas and institutions which represent a central focus of this thesis are inextricably intertwined with late capitalism and a critique of those institutions is by nature a critique of the contemporary free market system of global *capitalist* economic organisation. It is difficult to conceive of a critical account of these institutions then without some considerable reference to the insights of Marxian analysis, despite some of the problems associated with these which will be discussed below. This introduction will conclude with an outline of chapters, detailing how the analysis will proceed throughout the thesis.

¹ Andrew Linklater (1996) notes that a Marxian inspired critical theory is distinguishable from a post-modern variant in its retention of the emancipatory element central to that tradition but rejected by postmodernism.

One of the more welcome consequences of the politics of globalisation (and the globalisation of politics) has been the widespread acknowledgement that such complexity warrants a more interdisciplinary approach to the study of social, cultural and political phenomena. In particular, the divide between the disciplines of International Relations (IR) and Politics will be further blurred in this work along with insights drawn from other fields of the social sciences.² While IR has long held as its own the diplomatic and military strategic realm of relations between states, especially in the dominant accounts of realism and neorealism, Politics and Political Science have tended to examine the internal workings and institutions of the state. Meanwhile the dominant liberal paradigm has tended to separate the economic from the political. Challenges to this separation emerged most notably during the late 1960s and 1970s for example in the ground-breaking work of Susan Strange (1970, 1971, 1972a, 1972b, 1972c, 1974) and others working in the field of what came to be known as international (now more commonly 'Global') Political Economy.³ Indeed, these initial suspicions regarding the increasing porosity of the state's borders were overwhelmingly in recognition of the early *economic* aspects of what we now term globalisation and the inseparability of the political and the economic. These economic intrusions were presciently indicated by Charles Kindleburger's now well-known and oft quoted remark that "the state is just about over as an economic unit" (1969:207).

The important arguments made by Strange in particular were however mostly aimed towards blending international economic analysis with the more established preoccupations of IR and foreign-policy analysis such as diplomacy and military strategy and where "the interaction of economic processes and enterprises is often largely ignored." (1972a: 192). This explicit plea for an end to such an "intellectual apartheid" (where Strange notes that the economists represented

² In particular the focus upon ideas, ideology, and the critical discursive turn have drawn insights from the Frankfurt School of Cultural Studies.

³ See also a number of essays in the edited collection by Robert Cox (1969)

the role of the Afrikaner, 1972b: 63), along with those of Kindleburger (1969, 1970), were a timely and welcome response to the inherently political nature of the international economic (Sterling and Dollar) crises of the 1960s and 70s, the intellectual and political responses to which, as I will later argue in more detail, ushered in the era of transnational governance, economic integration and rapid institutional shift we recognise today as central to, even definitive of globalisation. The key technological aspects of these historical changes and their complex myriad implications for international organisation were highlighted by J. G. Ruggie who noted that “technological, ecological, political, economic, and social environments are becoming so globally enmeshed that changes taking place in one segment of international society will have consequential repercussions in all others.” (1975: 557). The point then, is that although the exact term itself would not be officially coined until 1983 by Theodore Levitt in his *Harvard Business Review* article *The Globalization of Markets*, the important political implications of this phenomenon were already well understood by Strange, Kindleburger, Ruggie and the numerous IR/IPE scholars who followed in their wake, analysing and interpreting what Keohane and Nye later and now famously termed “complex interdependence” (1977). Indeed, it was this work by US scholars Keohane and Nye which ushered in the early ‘neoliberal’ approaches and the growing popularity of institutional analysis in IR as a challenge to the prevailing dominance of realism.⁴

In a critical review of this seminal work in IR however, Kal Holsti (1978) immediately recognised and highlighted the profoundly uneven nature of this ‘interdependence’ and suggested that the increased connectedness and ‘transnationality’ of international politics was as much, if not more, a

⁴ It should be noted here that the term neoliberalism refers rather confusingly to both a major school in the IR literature and to a set of arrangements and policy prescriptions which characterise the key aspects contemporary or ‘late’ capitalism. This confusion is perhaps further complicated as these two distinct uses of the word also share a number of core principles and assumptions. These will be made more explicit below in the discussion of neoliberal institutionalism as a perspective in IR and in Ch. 4’s genealogy of neoliberalism. I will indicate which I am referring to by using the acronym NI for Neoliberal Institutionalism as a school of IR

matter of dependency. Indeed, the Marxian, neo-Marxist and Gramscian traditions of socio-economic and political analysis had long espoused the inseparability of the political and economic realms (see eg. Wood, 1981). Holsti (1978) identifies Frank (1969) and Galtung (1971) as the key early exponents of this emphasis on *dependency* rather than simple interdependence.⁵ A central component of these analyses of the world-system was the structured hierarchies of unequal power which survived the emergence of that significant proportion of humanity from the formal political status of colonial subordination. While the world-system nevertheless retains the political and economic status of the dominant/subaltern relationship, the overly determinist slant of these analyses tend to limit their conception of human agency. However, recognition of this remaining and exacerbating economic hierarchy, inequality and socio-cultural dislocation must remain a core element of any critical analysis of contemporary global governance and an account of the attendant power relations is vital for an adequate interpretation of this stark and multidimensional inequality. In addition, the appreciation of the long cycles in the historical development of capitalist social relations is a useful counterweight to the contemporary biases of much current globalisation theory.

Discussions and interpretations of global political economy require analysis of both state and market and most importantly the ways in which these fields of action constitute each other in the process of globalisation. Within such analysis, abstract talk of 'the state' must be carefully qualified with the recognition that states encounter globalisation and global markets in very different ways and from very different positions of capability. Most notably, such distinctions must be regarded in the differences between so-called 'western' states and the situation of postcolonial states.

⁵ See also Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1979) in a similar vein and also Paul James (1997) who details the declining purchase of these theories with the passage of time and changing context but makes a number of interesting proposals which retain the critical and emancipatory elements of dependency theories. Also Andrews (1982) provides a useful brief review of these works and a more recent exposition can be found in van der Pijl (2009 ch. 7)

Moreover, within these loosely defined categories, many further differences exist, such as those between the powerful newly modernising BRICs⁶ and the underdeveloped and even so-called 'failed' states of sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. These divisions should not mark the only axes of stark and apparently growing inequalities. It should also be noted that socio-economic trends demonstrate that in addition to the long disparities of the so-called 'north' and 'south', it is also possible to identify the growth of a 'north within the south and a south within the north', whereby inequality intensifies cheek by jowl within these regions and cities, politically destabilising them (Sassen 2005).

While the more open-minded and academically adventurous scholars began to challenge such disciplinary and categorical boundaries some decades ago, the study of economics (market forms) and politics (state forms), have at least until relatively recently (and in many places continue to) been treated separately. Processes of globalisation and regionalisation over recent decades however have revealed that such a strong divide between the international/ transnational/ global and the state, and between the economic and the political is simply no longer feasible in any study which attempts to understand the challenges of social, political, cultural, economic analysis in the 21st century. The state is continuously and deeply permeated by multiple external forces and these forces themselves remain largely a product of the policies of a number of still remarkably powerful and salient states. To ignore one is to severely delimit the possibilities of our understanding the other.

This thesis addresses the process of political globalisation and institutional shift through an argument that considers it to be a contingent and therefore contestable outcome of deliberate policy interventions, on the part of a variety of actors and institutions, including states, designed to

⁶ The acronym refers to Brazil, Russia, India and China but we might add some of the resource rich countries such as Saudi Arabia and Nigeria which perhaps retain a little more agency in the international arena than the poorest states.

relocate or 're-centralise' aspects of power from the national to the global. As we have seen, there is little new in the assertion that the modern state, organised more or less around the concept of the nation,⁷ is becoming less coherent as a unitary political actor. It has become something of a mainstream perspective to acknowledge, or at least discuss, the diminishing autonomy of the modern state and the apparent re-scaling of sovereignty. Indeed, a powerful strand of neoliberal ideology exists in what has come to be known as the 'hyperglobalist thesis'⁸ (Ohmae 1996; Friedman 2000; Strange 1996, although see in contrast: Hirst, Thompson and Bromley 2009; Weiss 1998). The transformation of the state is however not simply a case of its diminishing power. As Randeria notes, "the state is both an agent and an object of globalization. Although inadequate, the state remains indispensable as its laws and policies play a key role in transposing neo-liberal agendas to the national and local levels" (2007: 2). The reconfiguration of power within states is an important element of the process and one particularly salient factor, particularly within states in advanced capitalist societies (SIACS) has been the accumulation of power from the legislature to the executive (Sassen 2007). But nor is globalisation simply the transformation of the state, however important that may be. It is also about the proliferation and increased salience and agency of non-state actors.⁹

While in some instances this process appears to have been something of a deliberate and internally driven process, as with the advanced industrialised countries, in other cases such as the less

⁷ I use the term modern state rather than nation state to downplay the national coherence which these institutions represent. Very few modern states can now, if they ever could, be considered as nationally and/or culturally homogenous. The term modern state locates these institutions historically in the modern age and confirms their historical specificity while leaving to one side the thorny question of whether the nation ever or anywhere corresponded with a particular state.

⁸ However, the hyperglobalist thesis exists across the ideological spectrum including many theorists and activists among the global justice, anti-capitalist and alter-globalisation movements. (Colas, 2003:98)

⁹ Here global governance does not merely refer to the well-known and much discussed Bretton Woods economic institutions (IMF, GATT/WTO and WB) and the various regimes for the maintenance of security, human rights promotion and environmental regulation as important as these are. Equally pertinent but less discussed and recognised are the emergence of transnational institutions of private authority (Hall and Biersteker, 2002), and more or less democratic forms of global civil society. See also Keane (2003) and for a more sceptical and critical account of GCS Lipschutz, (2005)

developed regions of the global south or periphery, the driving factors have been more external. Despite these important differences, globalisation has transformed the internal structure of all modern states and is rendering them increasingly similar in terms of their political culture and policy frameworks. Whilst many differences remain, globalisation can be seen as a homogenising process where national economic policy is heavily determined by the market logics of global capitalism and the political culture moves towards a limited liberal democracy. By limited I refer to the fact that elected governments claim an increasingly limited set of policy options from which to choose as a result of the perceived need to compete in response to the exigencies of global capital markets and the demands of private interests in the form of trans-national corporations.¹⁰ Perhaps the defining feature of this process is the privatisation of public assets and institutions such as education, welfare and healthcare, but this is not an automatic evolutionary process, it requires concrete and on-going political action on the part of the state and other powerful actors. In addition, it is possible to identify an enhanced role for those state agencies which are connected more directly with the institutions and processes of global governance such as central banks and ministries of finance matched with a relative decline in the effective function of ministries of labour and welfare as these aspects are increasingly subject to private interests and market forces. This result of this trend has been identified by Andrew Baker, with the UK as a primary example, as a 'residual state' whereby "transnationalised interests have effectively penetrated the very core of central state agencies" (2000: 366). But this is by no means to suggest that such interests are necessarily external to the state. Rather, it is more accurate to recognise this interpretation of globalisation as one in which "the British state restructures itself to reflect the extent of Britain's integration into the global economy." As a result, according to Baker, "the emerging global economy is not something that exists independently of the state. It is developing because certain state agencies have acted on

¹⁰ Coffey and Thornley's (2009) description of Third Way policies in the UK as leading to what they refer to as the 'abject state' is another interesting and persuasive interpretation of the contemporary relationship between SIACs and processes of globalization.

behalf of certain social forces and actively promoted it" (2000:366). This process, and in particular the implications that it holds for the possibility of democratic politics both within and beyond the state, will be examined in more detail below and in the following chapters. My purpose here is to establish at the outset the need for a combined state/globality focus to provide an adequate understanding of the institutional changes which characterise the contemporary processes and practices of global governance. Philip Cerny (2000: 301) describes the process as a transformation from the 'national' to the 'competition' state involving a threefold paradox whereby firstly:

Globalisation can *both* undermine the domestic authority of the state and at the same time lead to the de facto expansion of state intervention *and* regulation in the name of competitiveness and marketization. Second, states and state actors are in themselves the greatest promoters of globalisation as they attempt to cope more effectively with 'global realities'. In undermining the autonomy of their own 'national models'—embedded state forms, contrasting state interventionism, and differing state/society arrangements—by chasing international competitiveness, they disarm themselves. Finally, states seem to be getting more and more socially fragile—thereby further undermining the capacity of political and social forces within the state to resist globalisation.

This increasing fragility and narrowing of policy options open to state actors is matched at the global level by the enhanced growing power of a set of institutions which combine to intervene and regulate global political processes in what has come to be known neutrally as 'global governance'. As agency and sovereignty appear to drain away from the modern state, they gather form at the global level and this coalescence of power increasingly resembles something akin to a global state. This process has been recognised and articulated by a handful of authors in various ways, but most of whom draw more or less from a (neo-)Marxist tradition (eg. Hardt and Negri, 2000; Shaw, 2000; Robinson, 2004), although see also Wendt for a more constructivist but equally persuasive account of the formation of a transnational/global/world state. However, "the highlighting of broad-based

governance is dangerous, if it serves to obscure the state core of contemporary globality” (Shaw, 2000: 90). In short, no account of globalisation is complete without a theory of the state and the recognition that some states have retained more power, agency and room for manoeuvre than others.

Research questions and thesis outline

A central aspect of the argument developed in this thesis is that a body of ideas which can be attributed the shorthand of neoliberal ideology are important for understanding neoliberal forms of governmentality and can, at least to a limited extent, even be considered explanatory factors in themselves. One key purpose of focussing on ideational variables in constructing and constituting forms, processes and practices of global governance/governmentality is to show that such a process is not ineluctable or inexorable but highly contingent and therefore contestable. Contrary to much conventional wisdom, alternative globalisations are not only possible but also desirable, as discussed in the final chapter. Indeed, a powerful element of neoliberal ideology is the portrayal and reification of this form of globalisation as inevitable in a historical narrative of progress, due to a particularly narrow representation of human nature. Although as Karl Popper (1957) persuasively warns us in his critique of one determinist variant of historical materialism, we should be highly suspicious of any theory of historical development which claims the status of inevitability. Many aspects and accounts of neoliberalism come very close to such claims.¹¹

¹¹ Take for example then, the following extract from the The (1995) *Commission on Global Governance*. “The development of global governance is part of the evolution of human efforts to organize life on the planet, and that process will always be going on. Our work is no more than a transit stop on that journey.” While not exactly what one might describe as an archetypal neoliberal tract, many aspects of the report illustrate the futility of resisting the contemporary drive for governance at the global level.

The broad-based question from which this research derives is: How, and to what extent, does neoliberal ideology (ideas, beliefs, norms and discourses) constitute the processes, mechanisms and institutional arrangements of global economic governance (GEG)? However, as we shall see, the study of ideas and institutions now covers a vast field of research in Politics and IR and cannot be restricted to institutional arrangements as either state *or* global. In contrast to such a distinction these institutions and processes must be recognised as transcending this increasingly arbitrary boundary (Walker 1993). The fundamental role of ideas and ideology in politics has returned and been enhanced with the emergence of constructivism as a 'new mainstream' approach and traditional forms of institutional analysis have been reinvigorated by interpretivist elements of the 'new institutionalism' which has itself felt the need to take some account of ideational and discursive factors in the understanding and attempted explanation of institutional change.¹² In light of these interesting and welcome developments, the thesis then narrows the above 'meta' question to more manageable questions of: (1) How and from where did neoliberal ideology emerge as a normative discursive force and (2) How does the neoliberal discourse of *The Economist* reify, help to authorise and legitimate a particular conception and practice of GEG as inevitable and inexorable?

This question will hopefully provide some better answers to the broader inquiry as well as demonstrating the importance of understanding globalisation as an ideological and discursive process of change as well as a material one. Indeed, it will attempt to show that a satisfactory understanding of globalisation must recognise the dialectical relationship between ideational/discursive and material/institutional aspects of this historical process. This will provide

¹² As I will discuss below, the debate around the combined goals and relative merits of explanation and understanding has itself become an issue of some considerable dispute within the constructivist school of thought.

a more complex and nuanced account of the historical rise of neoliberal ideas and institutions than those explanations provided by rationalist theories of neoliberal institutionalism itself.

I begin with an initial introductory discussion of the concepts of ideas and power which will lead into an outline of the (critical constructivist) ontological and epistemological premises that inform this research and its methods of analysis. These premises and assumptions must be discussed in relation to, and weighed against, alternative approaches which might instead be taken to address the proposed objects of research. As such I will provide a critique of the rationalist assumptions which inform neoliberal institutionalism that might be seen as the dominant school of thought in relation to the study of political institutions and global governance. Following this, I will return to questions of power through a discussion of structure and agency debates. In brief, I suggest that the inherently dialectical nature of these categories requires that we search for and focus upon the factors which mediate this relationship between agents, structures and social change. My argument will attempt to show that ideas and ideology, expressed in a variety of discursive forms and processes, can exhibit such a role in the constitution of political forms—not least the neoliberal institutions of global governmentality.

In what remains of this chapter I will introduce very briefly the key concepts of power, ideas and interests as an initial set of signposts from which the rest of the thesis will proceed. In addition, I will lay the foundations for the epistemological assumptions and methodological procedures upon which the research is based. Some ontological premises have already been outlined above but I hope to clarify these further as the chapter and the rest of the thesis develops.

Ontology, Epistemology and Methods – Ideas, Power and Critique

The study of politics is, above all, the examination of power in its myriad forms and locations. Indeed, so diverse are they that no single study could adequately interrogate all the many aspects of power. The various approaches and sub-disciplines of political analysis therefore, tend to focus upon just one or two of these at any one time. Individual actors, classes, states, civic institutions, private corporations, etcetera. One key aspect of power which has until quite recently received only rather marginal attention, and yet arguably runs through all the above locations, is its relationship with ideas. One reason for this oversight in mainstream political analysis has been the attempt to emulate the positivism of the natural sciences in the study of the social and the political. The inherent indeterminacy of ideas leads some to suggest they are simply too 'fuzzy' to study compared with 'hard' data such as voting patterns, trade figures, arms budgets etcetera. But to ignore the role of ideas in politics on this basis is to submit to the vicious circle identified by Philip Converse, it is "a primary example for the doctrine that what is important to study cannot be measured and what can be measured is not important to study" (1964: 206). Converse challenges this awkward conundrum by suggesting we accept types of 'measurement' which are not reduced to brute quantification or pure observation, but remain attached to notions of logic, reason, plausibility, justification, probability etcetera, which play a central role in our ability to make claims, arguments and judgements about the likely effects and consequences of social phenomena such as ideas and belief systems. Ideas and beliefs are simply too important to be excluded from political analysis and too complex to be reduced entirely to quantitative data. As a result we must make use of analytical tools which extend beyond the scientism that characterises much social, political and especially contemporary economic analysis.

Ideas

It is worth leaving theory and methodology aside perhaps for one minute to note that, while the academic practice of social and political analysis has mostly and for the large part of the past several decades played down the role of ideas, the most significant and successful political movement of the period has placed the role of ideas and their dissemination at the very centre of their project. Neoliberalism has, since the end of World War II, grown from a trampled, discredited and apparently outdated set of ideas into what can only be described as the dominant ideology of contemporary globalisation. The individuals who set about building this movement in the 1930's were all too aware of the claim, attributed to Victor Hugo, that "[a]ll the forces in the world are not so powerful as an idea whose time has come." Indeed, they would have to wait many years for the time to be right for these particular ideas to take hold in the public consciousness as conventional wisdom, but when that time came with the various political and economic crises of the 1970's, an apparently coherent set of explanations and contiguous policy recommendations were waiting in the historical wings, ready and raring to go.

One of the most important individual thinkers of the Neoliberal movement gave the following advice to Antony Fisher when he asked his advice about entering politics: "Society's course will be changed only by a change in ideas. First you must reach the intellectuals, the teachers and writers, with reasoned argument. It will be their influence on society which will prevail, and the politicians will follow." (Hayek, quoted in Blundell, 1990:6). Fisher went on to incorporate the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) in 1955, a key think-tank for the promotion of neoliberal ideas in Britain and according to Milton Friedman, Fisher was to become the "single most important person in the development of Thatcherism" (quoted in Cockett 1995:122).

This appreciation of the power of ideas has for a long time been lost to many of those active in the study *and* practice of politics and I will argue that the connection between theory and practice, so

important to many Marxists and 'left progressives' has been insufficiently demonstrated until recent years. The role of ideas in helping to articulate theory and practice is however recognised by Michel Foucault in his assertion that:

[t]here are more ideas on earth than intellectuals imagine. And these ideas are more active, stronger, more resistant, more passionate than "politicians" think. We have to be there at the birth of ideas, the bursting outward of their force: not in books expressing them, but in events manifesting this force, in struggles carried on around ideas, for or against them. (quoted in Eribon 1991: 282)

Of course then, it is not ideas working in isolation which have material consequences. For ideational factors to gain social, cultural and political purchase they must somehow resonate with the historical, social and institutional context in which they are voiced. The ideas which constituted social democracy and a regulated system of open international trade made sense to the populations of Western Europe and North America in the 1940s and 50s due to the widespread consensus that the war and depression, followed by the rise of fascism and the descent once again into global conflict, were largely a result of economic crises and social precarity which were, in turn, increasingly assumed to be a feature of unfettered market forces (Polanyi, 1957; Blyth, 2002; Kindleburger, 1986; O'Brien and Williams, 2007).

In an alternative interpretation, early neoliberal ideas attempted to cluster Stalinism and fascism together as merely different shades of a dangerous and degenerate collectivism, and their supposedly shared anti-democratic tendencies an inevitable outcome of any form of social planning and government intervention, democratic, national or whatever (Hayek 1944). These particular ideas which clearly offered a very different analysis of the crises of the 1914-1945 period would remain marginal at best, until the institutional arrangements of Bretton Woods and the domestic policies of Keynesian demand-management appeared to begin to unravel during the 1970s. At this

new point of crisis, in a new political, economic, cultural context, their policy prescriptions for institutional revision and transformation gained their own increased legitimacy and purchase on the popular consciousness. This complex historical interplay between ideas and material events and actions is key for understanding the potential dangers, progressive possibilities and even strategic insights for future institutional transformation in pursuit of a more democratic, just and equitable institutional design for world politics.

Power and interests

At the centre of this analysis is the claim that any political study must have at its heart the concept of power and that power can only be fully understood in its complex ideational as well as dispositional form. This is a contentious claim. However, power is necessarily one of the key concepts in politics which can be recognised as an ‘essentially contestable’ term. As Gallie remarks in his 1956 essay “When we examine the different uses of these terms and the characteristic arguments in which they figure we soon see that there is no one clearly definable general use of any of them which can be set up as the correct or standard” (168). On the necessarily subjective nature of this contestability and the kind of things we desire to achieve when we speak of power, Edward Said asks: “what is the relationship between one’s motive for imagining power, and the image one ends up with?” (1986:151). For these reasons and more, ‘power’ and a number of other key concepts in politics including ‘freedom’ and ‘interests’ (for an excellent discussion see Connelly, 1983) which are also important elements of this study, are the subject of much disagreement and debate. My purpose is by no means to argue for any correct definition of these terms, indeed Connelly asserts that any such “desire to expunge contestability from the terms of political enquiry expresses a wish to escape politics” (1983: 213) This being the case, it is nevertheless necessary to make some initial claims regarding the conceptualisation of power which underpins the present work and the way in which I intend to answer questions about it.

Constraints of space obviously prevent a full, or perhaps even adequate, discussion of the nature of power here but a few guiding points are helpful to initiate and direct the discussion that will evolve further in subsequent chapters. To begin, I suggest that power is the problem which politics, both academic and practical, attempts to solve. The purpose of democratic thought and practice is not simply about individual liberty but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, the legitimisation and equalisation of power. While recognising that a complete solution to such a problem may well be impossible, it is the concept which provides the vital link between theory and practice in the social sciences. The unequal distribution of power which has characterised the history of human civilisation is the problem for which democratic theory and practice has evolved and the earliest thinkers who can be considered 'political' have wrestled with these issues. From Aristotle and Plato, through La Boetie, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx and Weber, to the establishment of Politics as a professional discipline in the 20th century the distribution of power has been the central problem to be considered. In modern politics these problems have necessarily engaged with key political institutions such as the state which, as we shall see, is another heavyweight contender for contestability. However, a number of other actors and institutions have also attracted the attention of theorists of power. It is nevertheless beyond dispute that social institutions, broadly defined, are inextricably intertwined with the concept of power.

More recent discussions of the concept of power in what has come to be known (for better or worse) as 'Political Science' developed that concept in ways which went way beyond pre-modern and early political philosophy (while still heavily indebted to them) and has since expanded upon much of the initial discussions and debates of the 1940's and 50's. These early debates around pluralism and elite theory (Truman, 1951; Mills, 1956; Dahl, 1956, 1961, 1957, 1958; Polsby, 1963) and the move to focus on overtly observable political behaviour as means of locating and analysing power have been greatly enhanced (and admittedly complicated) by discussions of systemic and

structural power. The early behavioural focus of political science¹³ was deemed by many to overemphasise the level of consensus pay insufficient attention to hidden or 'latent' conflict in the political system which is not so easily measured and thus largely overlooked in the work of many early behaviourists. The consensual bias might be seen as resulting from the post-war context of US politics where most of the analysis was applied. This particular context is perhaps not entirely characteristic of many instances of the effects of power in society but as I will suggest, the contexts in which power is exercised and analysed are relevant to the possible outcomes.

A well-known and useful schema of this development of the treatment of power from the behavioural to the more structural and contextual is that laid out by Steven Lukes in his three dimensional typology. This significantly enhanced the earlier works of Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz (1962) who, respectively, identified power primarily with decision-making and agenda setting.

By drawing upon the writings of Antonio Gramsci and his concept of hegemony, Lukes' 'third dimension' stresses the ideological factors by which actors preferences might be shaped in order to achieve their consent in situations contrary to their *real interests*. Lukes recognises the normative and political associations of these three rather different ways of conceptualising power. Decision-making is associated with a liberal account of politics, agenda-setting corresponds with a more reformist agenda, while Lukes' own contributions represent a more radical or critical account of power politics. Despite the important recognition of this significant factor, Lukes' analysis throws up some intriguing and difficult problems of its own, many of which are acknowledged explicitly within the book but their lack of resolution requires some further discussion and analysis.¹⁴ Perhaps

¹³ For a well-balanced review and critique of behavioural analysis in politics, see Sanders (2010)

¹⁴ Lukes has indeed done this in a (2005) second edition with two substantial extra chapters which clarify a number of points, respond to the numerous criticisms and expands the Third dimension of power slightly to incorporate the insights of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and others. While in this new edition the third dimension or radical view of power is better explicated, the three-dimensional schema of his original

the key difficulty is the age old problem of what Friedrich Engels termed 'false consciousness' (Gabel, 1975; Rosen, 1996) which itself turns, somewhat controversially, upon questions of ideology that are themselves central to Marxian modes of critique and have more recently fed strongly into methods of discourse analysis (see Thompson, 1984 esp. ch.3 and Eagleton 2007 ch.7, Frow, 1986 p.61-7) This connection will be further explored in chapter 2 but first it is necessary to further clarify the important distinction in Lukes' analysis between real and perceived interests. Having done so, I will reflect upon the epistemological, ontological and methodological ramifications of this welcome extension to the behavioural, liberal and rationalist conception of political power and agency and demonstrate the similar limitations which have dogged neoliberal and rationalist institutionalism.

Real and perceived interests

Interests are central to both political analysis and to normative political discourse. The pursuit and satisfaction of interests is a key goal of democratic life and an account of political interests is an essential component of any understanding of power. This point can be illustrated by the reference to interests in common political parlance such as: the national interest, mutual interests, interest groups, class interests and public vs. private interests. In addition, any consideration of processes of social change and political transformation are likely to hang heavy for all those involved due to whether their interests are either served by the status quo or by some alternative set of institutional arrangements or socio-economic 'structure'. In short, to exert agency, to act politically, is to pursue interests either individually, but more commonly, collectively.

project begins to unravel as it becomes increasingly clear that two rather different approaches to power are possible and in many ways incommensurable.

Lukes defines his concept of power rather simplistically at the outset by stating that “*A* exercises power over *B* when *A* affects *B* in a manner contrary to *B*’s interests” (2005: 37). In doing so, and drawing on the work of both Balbus (1971) and Connolly (1972, 1983), he qualifies the statement somewhat, recognising that the notion of interests is “irreducibly evaluative” (2005: 37) and as such, discussion of them “provides a licence for the making of normative judgements of a moral and political character” (2005:37). Indeed, our subjective moral and political positions and priorities are likely to place considerable influence upon how and what we might conceive to be in our own or someone else’s interest. In this way he criticises and goes beyond the rather simplistic liberal pluralist accounts of interests whereby individuals are assumed to associate these directly with their policy preferences (Truman, 1951; Polsby, 1959; Shubert, 1960) and utilitarian conceptions of interests as ‘want-regarding’ such as those of Barry (1965) (and dismissed by Connolly (1972: 53-59)). I will return below to a more detailed criticism of these liberal ‘rational-choice’ accounts of interests and decision-making as they have been applied in much of the dominant literatures of IR. Despite the above acknowledgment by Lukes of the ‘open-textured’¹⁵ nature of agents’ interests, he persists in an attempt to make an analytical distinction between real and perceived interests. Again, drawing on Connolly, Lukes attempts to clarify by suggesting the radical view he expounds that people’s preferences may themselves be a product of a system which works against their real interests, and, in such cases, relates the latter to what they would want and prefer “were they able to make the choice” (p.38), given the appropriate or complete information. This moves the debate on considerably as a power relationship here consists of more than simply *A*’s ability to get *B* to do something they would not otherwise do, to the already briefly mentioned matter of false consciousness or misperceived interests. While most commonly associated with certain types of Marxian scholarship, such a conception of power might also be identified in feminist

¹⁵ See Connolly (1983: 64) who in turn draws upon Waismann’s ideas on verifiability. HLA Hart was an equally influential exponent of this constructivist view of language which probably originated in the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

understandings and analyses of patriarchy.¹⁶ What unites these various approaches to some notion of systemic or structural power is a critical stance which connects the theory of social analysis with the practice of political emancipation. (Hindess, 1996: 68-69)

This understanding of power, for Lukes, requires (at the very least) that we try to show how *B* demonstrates behaviour which is contrary to her real interests and Connolly's attempted resolution of the problem in the notion of 'objective interests' is clearly influential to his position. It should be noted however that Connolly makes a number of clarifications to his proposal, for him then:

The key criterion is the *choice* of the agent involved, but the *privileged* choice is one made after the fact, so to speak, rather than before it. This does require investigators to make difficult judgements, in many situations, about the choices a person would make *if* he had the relevant experiences, but such a reference to counterfactual conditions is required by most concepts employed in contemporary political inquiry (for instance, power). [emphasis added] (2005: 65)

To some extent however, this seems to skirt around the problem. Lukes seems to be conceding the somewhat paradoxical point that these purportedly *objectively* defined interests must remain significantly a matter of the *perception* of the actors involved. As Hay (2002: 181) notes, there is very little genuine objectivity within the process whereby an actor ascertains their *real* interests. Furthermore, such a judgement could only be made after the fact and under the hypothetical assumption that the agent in question possesses, or could ever possess, the required 'complete information'. Even given this information on the part of the agent/actor, the observer/analyst must still make a subjective judgement which might (and should) at best strive for some objectivity. If,

¹⁶ Hindess also makes an interesting case that these recognitions of a wider social and cultural element to power have their foundations in Locke's 1689 *Essay on Human Understanding* where Locke suggests that "It is easy to imagine, how by these means it comes to pass that *Men* worship the Idols that have been set up in their Minds; grow fond of Notions they have been long acquainted with there; and *stamp the Characters of Divinity, upon Absurdities and Errors*, become zealous Votaries to Bulls and Monkeys; and contested too, fight and die in defence of their Opinions." (Essay, Book I, ch.III, S26; 1957, p.83; quoted in Hindess, 1996:75-76. emphasis in Hindess)

as we have seen, political agents are capable of being prevented from realising their real interests, what is it which prevents the observer/analyst from being similarly deceived? Indeed, it is this very question which more than anything differentiates natural science from the study of social phenomena (Winch, 1958). If there is no privileged 'Archimedean point' from which we can achieve some kind of pure and unbiased perspective, the very foundations for an empiricist 'scientific' study of the social and political would appear to begin to fall away.

However, despite some explicit misgivings, Lukes retains this dubious distinction in his analysis and poses the question of whether power can be exercised by *A* over *B*, in the real but unperceived interests of *B*, in other words, where the preferences of *A* and *B* are in conflict, but the preferences of *A* are in *B*'s real interests. He suggests two possible responses:

(1) That *A* might exercise 'short term power' over *B* (with an observable conflict of subjective interests, but that if and when *B* recognises his real interests the power relation ends it is self-annihilating; or (2) that all or most forms of attempted or successful control by *A* over *B*, when *B* objects or resists, constitute a violation of *B*'s autonomy; that *B* has a real interest in his own autonomy; so that such an exercise of power cannot be in *B*'s real interests. (1974: 36-37)

Lukes admits being tempted by the second, but in fact opts for the first of these options, insisting that some kind of empirical basis must be provided for the identification of real interests. With such a proviso then he suggests any potential dangers may be obviated. I am inclined to disagree as the second option clearly grants a stronger hand to claims for human autonomy, albeit at the expense of losing the coherence of the three-dimensional view. Option one is persuasive for Lukes in that it corresponds to a more parsimonious account of social science and it corresponds with his earlier assertion that the identification of those interests ultimately always rests on empirically supportable and refutable hypotheses (2005: 28-29). This would be acceptable if they were not also morally or normatively suspect and therefore somewhat contrary to his supposed radical view.

Lukes seems to be sacrificing some of his critical project to the requirements of a more empirical analysis, and in his defence, there seems to be no easy way around such a trade-off. In a radical and therefore critical and normative analysis, the employment of the concept of power should, I argue, err in the other direction in areas of such ambiguity and uncertainty. If it does not, then the critical and emancipatory potential and purpose of understanding the workings of power is limited, if not lost.

Furthermore, to take an actor's own preferences or perceptions of interests at any given time or place is no guarantee that they are either universal or consistent. They will vary through time, across cultures and an almost infinite number of variations in context. Alternatively, in order to attempt to consider an actor's interests objectively we must project an external (and therefore potentially arbitrary or random) notion of what we might consider to benefit and/or harm them. However, this must be an equally subjective consideration on the part of the observer whose judgement will be similarly contingent. Furthermore, we must consider the implications of the 'double hermeneutic' problem in social sciences whereby the concepts of social science themselves may affect the ways in which actors come to perceive their interests (Lynch 2008). After all, "the concepts of the social sciences are not produced about an independently constituted subject-matter, which continues regardless of what these concepts are. The 'findings' of the social sciences very often enter constitutively into the world they describe" (Giddens 1987: 20).

There thus appears to be no way in which to firmly ground any notion of interests in any purely objective foundation. This does not however mean that the notion of foundations should be rejected outright, or that some empirical methods might illuminate aspects of them. A study of social subjects and their supposed interests and preferences should remain sceptical of these whilst holding on to values of plausibility and a defensible argument for the accuracy of the analysis and the ability to persuade others. I will return to this important distinction below in some more detail

in the process of evaluating rational choice explanations for institutional change. First I will attempt to find a possible route out of Lukes' apparent conundrum.

The process of preference forming of and among agents, collective or individual, is as much ideological work as it is a predictable, materially conditioned process of rational judgement. Preferences are shaped not only by bodily and physical criteria, as many liberal/rationalist accounts would have us believe. They are also always conditioned and shaped by ideas, norms beliefs and prejudices—in essence, they are highly contingent. This does not however mean that such notions are beyond the scope of understanding and/or even explanation. Ideas can, as we shall see, be identified and examined, if perhaps not firmly quantified,¹⁷ in the visible and demonstrable form of discourses and narratives. The identification and examination of these elements allows for an analysis of ideas and their articulation with certain political interests and strategic objectives. What is required also is that we make judgements about where power exists and is exerted and attempt to justify these judgements through the demonstration that certain semiotic data reveal something of the preferences and interests of the powerful and the strategic decisions which could follow from these. In such a way it may even be possible to reveal ideas as important, but by no means the only, causal factors in politics. It must be stressed however that such a strategy is one of reflexive interpretation.

The sheer complexity of power and its inherently contestable nature have even led some to be suspicious of its usefulness as a concept worthy of study and should simply be dismissed from political analysis (see Latour 1986; and somewhat more surprisingly, March 1966). Such an option is not amenable to the present study which seeks to make an argument for the constitutive and productive power of ideas and the dominance of neoliberal ideology in mainstream discourses of global governance. Indeed, an important element of this study argues that power has undergone

¹⁷ Although see Yee (1996)

some reorientation in the traditional location of many modern western nation states and that the non-state sphere has absorbed some of this power, this is key to the concept of institutional shift. It is not a simple case of states losing power and corporations and organisations gaining it. Power, as understood here is not always a zero sum game. What I suggest is that states continue to exert significant amounts of power, particularly SIACS, but in new ways and through new institutional forms. It therefore follows that greater attention should be directed to the emergence and nature of these institutional phenomena and more responsibility and accountability should be accorded to them if we can argue that they are more powerful than they once were.

Clearly, there is a great deal more that can be said but for now I suspend the discussion in considerable agreement with Lukes that power, rather problematically, “is at its most effective when it is least accessible to observation” (2005: 64) and I suggest that such a conclusion must render the purely empirical study of power and institutions somewhat limited. The difficulties with Lukes’ approach (according to Hay 2002) stem largely from his attempt to sustain an all-encompassing three dimensional approach which incorporates the earlier analyses of power which he rightly demonstrates as limited, within his own self-proclaimed three-dimensional radical view. While studies of the social and political world need not restrict themselves to a purely behavioural positivist approach based upon the notable and often beneficial advances this method has made in the study of the natural, non-human world, radical alternatives which implicate ideological structures of power in the very construction and constitution of interests take place on quite a different level. The advantage of Lukes’ project might be that it could enable a more stable foundation for debate to develop between mainstream behavioural and studies and the more radical ideology critique in which Lukes is interested. However, the very notion of such stable foundations is also rendered questionable by recent critical scholarship across a variety of social and human disciplines. What is required, according to Hay (2002: 185-6) is a redefinition of power where ‘analytical questions’, regarding the *identification* of power, are differentiated from the

normative *critique* of the distribution and exercise of power. The behavioural definition of power must be rejected and in its place Hay suggests a definition of power which emphasises:

not only the consequences of A's choices for the actions of, but also, and perhaps primarily, their effects upon the context in which the subsequent action must take place. Power then is about context shaping, about the capacity of actors to redefine the parameters of what is socially, political and economically possible for others. (Hay 2002:185)

Part of the difficulty with Lukes approach then, has also perhaps been part of its appeal and a reason for its widespread discussion. He seems to be attempting to shoehorn both a positivist *and* a post-positivist account of power into the same analytical shoe. The advantages of this are that the different sides of the debate may be more able to engage on the same ground and the hope is perhaps that a more unified body of research might be available to the social sciences. On such shared ground then, critical perspectives can attempt to persuade behavioural and pluralist accounts of the error of their analysis and, as such, 'win' the argument. However, the turn towards postmodernism by many across those disciplines in the years that followed Lukes' ground-breaking work largely put paid to any such attempt, for better or worse. Postmodernism bent the epistemological stick so far in the radical direction that any all-encompassing reconciliation was, perhaps permanently, beyond reach. Hay's critique of Lukes then emphasises and endorses the conception of power as indirect domination or 'context-shaping' "in which structures, institutions and organisations are shaped by human action in such a way as to alter the parameters of subsequent action" (2002:186) that Lukes highlighted. He rejects however, the attempt to construct an all-encompassing 'three-dimensional' schema, due to the quite different purposes which inform the work of behaviouralist and critical analysts of power.

It is worth recalling here then, the widely cited caveat of Robert Cox that "Theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose." (1981:129-130 [emphasis in original]). Here Cox is establishing

an important distinction between problem solving theory and critical theory. While for problem solving theory the prevailing structures and relations of power and the institutional matrix in which these are contained are taken for granted, critical theory “calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing.” (Cox 1981: 131). Such an approach does not simply address specific problems in order to make the system function more effectively but challenges the parameters of the problematic and the foundations and seeks to offer a wider picture of the socio-political complex as a whole, including the theories which claim to explain and justify its continued operation. Critical theory then includes and draws upon the various insights and perspectives of historical sociology, feminism, (neo-) Marxism, the critical cultural studies of the Frankfurt school, post-structuralism and postmodernism. Some of these perspectives do not reject positivism outright, but simply suggest that there is a wider and more complex set of questions to which the study of society should be directed. At the postmodern end of the spectrum, we find a complete rejection of positivism and sometimes even the very foundations of any supposedly emancipatory project common to much critical theory are themselves subject to critique and deconstruction.¹⁸ Perhaps worthy of note here is John Vasquez’s distinction between post-structuralism and postmodernism. He suggests that what is at stake is the notion of relativism, the extent to which claims to truth or knowledge are relative to the claimant or objectively verifiable. Vasquez claims that “whereas post-structuralists, particularly those who are inspired by Foucault, flirt with relativism, postmodernists like Lyotard and Baudrillard, embrace it” (1995:218). The role of ideational variables is deeply entwined with the relativist controversy and I will discuss below in Chapter four how it emerged in the Marxist debates

¹⁸ Overviews of poststructuralist IR can be found in, for example, James DerDerian and Michael J. Shapiro (eds.), *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (Lexington MA: Lexington Books, 1989); Michael J. Shapiro and Hayward R. Alker (eds.), *Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Identities*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994); and the 1990 special issue of *International Studies Quarterly*, 34.

on ideology and the sociology of knowledge, both of which, I argue, connect the critical traditions of Marxian analysis with the fundamental tenets of contemporary constructivism.

While not following a strident *anti*-foundational postmodern approach, this research is sceptical of a unified approach such as that attempted by Lukes where the critical and the purely empirical or empiricist can be effectively pursued as one in the so-called social and human sciences. The goals of these crucially different projects still seem to remain simply too divergent in their ultimate goals, and the attempt to merge them, I suggest, is to the potential detriment of both, but particularly limiting to critical social theory. Such attempts however remain very much part of the contemporary landscapes of Sociology, Politics and IR/IPE in the form of what has come to be known as social constructivism. In IR/IPE in particular, this emergent school of thought has been characterised by an attempt to merge critical and mainstream perspectives. On the part of traditional rationalists and empiricists, it is a response to the rising tide of the relativist challenge. On the part of critical theorists it has come from an understandable yet regrettable desire to reap the various professional benefits of engaging with the mainstream debates and thus find a wider audience. While sympathising with both sides, I suggest that this new middle ground is simply too broad to sustain its identity as a coherent single school of thought and below I will attempt to explain why.

To recap, in order to grasp the reformulation of power as suggested by Lukes and Hay (and their key antecedents in this matter (eg. Gramsci, the Frankfurt school and Foucault) the critical study of power must be understood through the play of knowledge, ideas and discourses. This requires a rather different kind of ontology and method from positivism and rationalism. Constructivism is amenable to such a critical account, but the approach has also been stretched over into more mainstream accounts of politics. The following chapterprogramme will explore both the problems and potential of such an epistemology and the methodological opportunities it affords to students

of power, institutional change and world politics more generally. As far as possible, these constructivist accounts will be compared and contrasted with their orthodox alternative of neoliberal institutionalism. However, such an attempt may be hampered by the very broad nature of both these schools of thought. While I acknowledge the areas where elements of these approaches seem to converge, the rationalist aspects of neoliberal institutionalism and the critical end of the constructivist spectrum will be highlighted in order to provide some sense of distinctiveness. I will return to a more comprehensive discussion of the critical contributions of Gramsci and Foucault and their respective concepts of hegemony and discourse in later chapters. Before proceeding, I will briefly outline the content of the chapters to follow.

Chapter outline

This thesis presents an analysis of how ideas and ideology play a central role in politics. It argues that contemporary political analysis which does not consider the role of ideas and cultural factors in its study will fail to sufficiently appreciate the full empirical reality of the material world. Ideas and power are argued to be intimately related. The ability to shape and influence the ideas of others is among the most important aspects of power. Such approaches to the study of power and politics are by no means new but have nevertheless been overlooked in a vast amount of the literature in political analysis. In particular, I argue that an ideational focus is indispensable for the kind of critical theory which informs this piece of research. Implicit in these arguments then is the assumption that contemporary structures of power are undemocratic and thus problematic, and a key purpose of this critical political analysis is to render these problems more visible through a discussion of ideology and discourse.

A second argument is that the study of politics and society must now consider the global reach of ideas and systems of power. This is not to suggest that all political analysis should be global in scope, of course it should not. In no way do I deny the importance and necessity of the micro-study

of the workings of power and resistance, but these valuable situated analyses are more meaningful alongside or within broader historical and global considerations of the political. Furthermore, the failure to at least question the supposed disciplinary boundaries of social, political and economic conduct, both temporal and spatial, will restrict our ability as scholars and or activists to provide new and useful insights into the structures of power and potential spaces for political action and transformation which are the very field and purpose of political analysis in an age of global neoliberalism and capitalist crisis.

The foregoing introduction has laid out some of the key preceding literatures in Politics, Sociology, International Relations and International/Global Political Economy (IR/IPE) which underpin and influence this analysis. It has begun to lay out the ontological and epistemological assumptions which inform the research. A central assumption, which will be the focus of the initial argument, is the fundamentally inter-relational nature of the key objects and subjects of the research and analysis. What follows will continue to elaborate the relationship between state and globality; between ideas/ideology, interests and power, structure and agency, political strategy and practice/praxis.

Chapter two entails a discussion of various perspectives on institutional change in the academic field of IR/IPE. It looks at Institutionalism more generally and the way this field of study has been treated in IR/IPE from the perspective known as neoliberal institutionalism. I criticise this perspective along with the rationalist assumptions upon which it is based.

Chapter three continues that discussion in relation to the 'new institutionalisms' imported from other disciplines such as History and Sociology and develops the argument for a relational approach to power and institutions in global governance. This discussion is carried out through an examination of the structure and agency debates which I argue cannot be 'resolved' as such but

that these aspects of the social and political world are crucial for the adequate understanding of historical developments and institutional change.

Chapter four continues with the theme of historical approaches in an argument which suggests that ideology is a crucial element for the understanding of relations of power at any given conjuncture. The Marxist approach to ideology is scrutinised and, while found to be problematic in parts, its subsequent refinement in the work of others such as Lukacs, Mannheim and in particular Antonio Gramsci and his concept of cultural hegemony, represents a useful set of tools by which to understand the processes of social change in the forms of government and governance through the twentieth century.

Chapter five returns briefly to the state as the central institution of world politics and re-examines the class relations therein. It discusses the relationship between class power and the state and the extent to which the state is 'relatively autonomous'.

Chapter six discusses how discourse theory extends the concept of ideology and explains how a critical discourse-historical analysis can shed light upon the political saliency of ideas and the relative legitimacy authority of political institutions. It can demonstrate the contingency of power and how forms of representation and signification are open to transformation. The chapter also argues that such an analysis is particularly suited to providing a critical understanding and of the informational nature of 'late' capitalism.

Chapter seven uses a critical discourse-historical method to trace the process by which neoliberal ideas emerged to become dominant among a global elite or 'transnational capitalist class' (TCC). It will expose the roots of neoliberalism in the neoclassical and marginalist economics of the late nineteenth century. It identifies the key thinkers and texts which came to define the project from the mid-20th century until the present day. In particular it will examine the social theory and ideas of F. A. Hayek who came to be regarded as perhaps the most influential of the neoliberal

ideologues. The second part of the chapter will consist of a critical discourse analysis case-study of The Economist. I argue that The Economist is a publication of vital importance to the TCC as a mass conduit for the dissemination of neoliberal ideas and ideology. The chapter examines and discusses the representations and terminology which articulate and express a dominant neoliberal discourse among its influential readership. In particular it examines the way in which key terms of reference to globalization are deployed such as privatization, harmonization and standardization. In addition it examines the way in which critical voices and resistance to neoliberal globalization are represented and delegitimized.

Ch 2. From Neoliberal to Constructivist Institutionalism

IR: A 'Battle' for the Middle Ground?

The discipline of IR is often presented as comprising three paradigms which consist of variations of realism, pluralism and radicalism which was IR's self-conscious attempt to put its own gloss on the wider conservative vs. liberal vs. Marxist account.¹⁹ While such a typology confuses as much as it reveals, it is a useful reference point by which to understand the way in which constructivism has engaged with the various themes of IR and IPE. To some extent, the constructivist research programme(s) has been a casualty of such a three way typology, to the extent it has been drawn into and stretched across the debates between the positivism of the mainstream and post-positivism of critical perspectives. The resultant stretching of the constructivist approach has, I argue, dulled its critical edge and thus limited part of its particular appeal. In what follows I will attempt to regain some of that edge while showing that constructivism represents some very useful theoretical insights for research across the transdisciplinary field of IR/IPE.

Even in the notoriously traditionalist and conservative discipline of IR, the scepticism towards positivist foundationalism and the turn to ideational variables has begun to make notable inroads into the mainstream on the back of a constructivist research programme. As I have suggested, ideas, values, norms and beliefs are crucial for understanding the way in which both agents' interests and the social institutions in which those interests are expressed are constituted, and constructivism has emphasised this in IR/IPE. This is on the whole a more complex and nuanced approach than traditional perspectives in the social sciences and some consideration must be given

¹⁹ See Smith, S (1995) 'Self-images of a discipline' in *International Relations theory and Beyond*

to the epistemological and ontological frameworks in which these cultural and ideational variables operate. To borrow a phrase from Risse-Kappen's (1994) well known essay, "Ideas do not float freely", they must be considered and analysed in relation to the material aspects of the world which they both reflect and constitute.

The sources of social constructivism and the reasons for its supposed emergence as a new 'middle ground' in IR are many and varied and have engendered some considerable disagreement and controversy as I will discuss below. Less controversial is that it is now considered to represent the main challenge to the rationalist orthodoxy of neoliberal institutionalism and other related positivist accounts of politics (Adler 1997). As noted in the initial discussion of power and interests above, an important distinction, or perhaps even division, between mainstream and critical approaches, has been that between theories which seek to describe the world as it is, and those normative perspectives which make claims about how the world could or should be. To a certain extent, this division seems to hold even *within* constructivist analysis, as it is possible to distinguish between conventional and critical perspectives or what Parsons (2010) describes as the modern and postmodern approaches. Ruggie (1998:35) has even suggested a third category of constructivism between the modern and postmodern variants. I suggest that such demarcations are perhaps unnecessarily rigid (indeed Parsons acknowledges that other lines could be drawn) and a less fixed association of relatively 'thick' and 'thin' versions suffices to account for the diversity of perspectives within constructivism. I am also sympathetic to Rengger's (2000) concern that certain strands of postmodernism are quite different from the defining aspects of constructivism despite their unmistakable role in developing some of the key insights.

It might be said that the novel ambition of constructivism in IR is that it attempts to describe and explain *how* the world came to be as it is, to *mean* what it does, whilst maintaining a critical/normative component which holds open the possibility for social transformation and

therefore emancipation. It is this second aspect that suggests a conception of constructivism distinct from the strictly modern and postmodern variations, and it is this which I aim to explore, develop and apply. This ambitiously broad research programme might be said to account for both the many criticisms which constructivism has drawn from a range of other perspectives, but also for the success with which it has engaged with mainstream debates. I suggest this engagement is what distinguishes critical constructivist scholarship from the radical interpretivism associated with post-structural and postmodernists such as Ashley, Walker Campbell and Shapiro. As such, the definition of constructivism used here is bracketed to exclude the anti-foundationalism which characterises some, but by no means all, forms of postmodernism. Critics from this radical side of the spectrum argue that the shortcomings of constructivism lie in its watering down of the critical project through an abiding, and in their opinion unwarranted, concern for materiality. Such radical interpretivists tend to:

object to the exclusion of challenging and thought-provoking questions about politics and the political. On the other hand, it is precisely a certain unproblematic acceptance of reality which has made the constructivist 'success story' possible. 'Taking reality into account' is one of the supposed virtues of constructivism. (Zehfuss, 2004:250)

Other radical interpretivists criticise constructivism as an example of mainstream/'malestream' IR incorporating 'acceptable' elements of ideational theories in order to appear more pluralised and representative of a diverse range of approaches, while in reality fixing boundaries in order to exclude important critical political projects which refuse to play by their 'scientific' rules (Weber, 1999; Walker, 2000). While sympathetic to such concerns, I suggest they are either somewhat overstated or unwarranted. Nevertheless, critical approaches, while maintaining some minimal foundations required for an emancipatory politics, need to remain wary of becoming hostages to the supposed fortunes of mainstream acceptance and engagement.

There are sufficient spaces in the constructivist research programme to offer opportunities for critical, normative and emancipatory goals which do not suffer the self-defeating consequences which follow from much radical interpretivism and post-modern approaches.²⁰ At the other (mainstream) end of the spectrum, caution should also prevail in order to preserve the critical and reflexive edge of constructivist scholarship. The supposed dangers of incorporation into dominant functionalist and/or rationalist research programmes stem in part from constructivism's late emergence in IR alongside other new approaches. The arrival of these new theoretical challenges to the orthodoxy of neorealism in IR has been described by some as the 'inter-paradigm' or 'third great debate' in IR.²¹ Crucial to these debates was the end of the Cold War and the apparent proliferation of numerous non-state actors or 'institutions' in world politics and the increased salience of 'regimes' of global governance.

End of the Cold War and the Third Debate

It has been a peculiar feature of IR to provide an account of its theoretical evolution as proceeding in a series of 'great debates'. This is perhaps due to the fact that the discipline is more prone than most to respond to historical transformations in its objects of analysis with a reorientation of its theoretical priorities. I do not intend to discuss the so-called great debates in detail here but the constructivist turn in IR/IPE is better understood in relation to the various geo-political transformations which marked the closing decades of the last century. Neoliberalism challenged the dominance of neorealism by highlighting the increased cooperation and interdependence which they observed among states. While adhering to many of the most fundamental assumptions

²⁰ For a more detailed discussion of some drawbacks of these approaches see Linklater 1998:66-71 and Hay, 2002, chapter 7)

²¹ For discussion of these debates in IR see Banks 1985, Lapid 1989, Vasquez 1995 and Waeber 1996, and for a somewhat contrary view, Narveson 2001.

of neorealism, neoliberalism attempted to provide an account of world politics which could more readily explain these apparent changes.

The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ongoing process of European unification rendered the static theories of neorealism increasingly vulnerable to criticism, but the distinction between neorealism and neoliberal institutionalist challenges became more a question of which aspects of world politics were the object of analysis than any serious dispute over paradigmatic issues. In fact there is less distance between the competing camps in the so-called neo-neo debate than is often claimed by both sides (Jervis, 1999: 43). It is a point conceded by Keohane and Martin that “for better or for worse institutional theory is a half sibling of neorealism” (1999: 3). Indeed, both demonstrate a rationalist bias which downplays, and even eradicates the constitutive role of ideas in the construction of interests and the shaping of institutional forms, “neither neorealists nor neoliberal institutionalists are content with interpreting texts: both sets of theorists believe that there is an international political reality” (Keohane 1989: 7-8). Moreover, neorealists and neoliberals also share a broad commitment to produce research which is considered relevant to the policy-making of statespersons. Its research objects are the realm of ‘high politics’, diplomacy, foreign policy, statecraft and it is therefore almost devoid of any substantial critique of the nature of the system itself.

Given the insubstantial differences between neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism, the most notable outcome of the inter-paradigm (or third) debate then, has been the emergence of a positivist/post-positivist divide. Keohane recognised the centrality of this two way divide in his 1988 presidential address to the International Studies Association: ‘International Institutions: Two Approaches’. This ‘reflectivist’ challenge came from a range of subaltern perspectives including critical theory, post-structuralism, postmodernism, feminism, historical sociology, post-colonialism

and neo-Gramscian Marxism. These literatures also conveyed between them the insights which came to be consolidated as constructivism in IR (Smith 1995: 24-30).

The positivist/post-positivist divide is by no means an attribute particular to the study of world politics. Indeed, it is sometimes noted that IR was perhaps the last bastion of positivist approaches to be assailed by the post-positivist onslaught (Hoffman, 1987).²² However, the slightly more basic argument between what 'is' and what 'ought to be' in IR goes back to the debates of the mid twentieth century between realism and idealism. In that long running debate, it was perhaps the established idealists of the 1930s, arguably the very founders of the discipline of IR, who bore the burden of critique and revision of their theories, indeed, it might be said, their outright rejection. The work and normative commitments of these largely liberally oriented scholars survived the decades of realist and neo-realist dominance throughout the Cold War, most notably in the rather niche form of what is often referred to as the English School of IR (Rengger 2000:81). They re-emerged largely intact to contribute significantly to the criticisms directed at mainstream positivist IR which stood shell-shocked and vulnerable as a result of the tectonic shift in world politics that was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The failure of mainstream theories of IR to be able to account for, let alone predict, this monumental transformation in their object of study shed doubt upon their claims for 'scientific' status and the supposed scientific credentials of their accounts of world politics. My point here is that a latent liberalism in IR fed not only into the neo-institutionalist schools but also into the very different critical and cosmopolitan reappraisals of what might constitute a more just world order or international society.²³

²² It has been noted by Drainville, A. (2001) that "IR is a field where critical theories go to die." (Comment made in response to a paper presented at the BISA Marxist working group conference, Sussex University 2001.)

²³ The work of Martin Wight was an early call for a social theory of world politics which preceded those of Wendt. In the seminal text of the English school *Diplomatic Investigations*, Butterfield and Wight note a specific slant of the British tradition in which has "probably been more concerned with the historical than the contemporary, with the normative than the scientific, with the philosophical than the methodological, with principles than policy" (1966: 12) See also the sophisticated contributions of Linklater, Booth and

In order to make a case for the critical interpretivist epistemology which underpins this research, it is necessary to show why a rationalist account is of limited use for such a study. These rationalist accounts are evident, even predominant, in both mainstream approaches of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism. I do not engage with neorealism here as it says little of consequence on the subject of global governance, regime theory and institutional analysis. It is more pertinent to make some reference to the various new institutionalist schools in politics and IR/IPE and how some of these have engaged with what might be regarded as more sociological, historical and critical approaches. These approaches have moved ideas and ideology to the forefront of their analysis.

Ideas and interests

I will suggest in the following chapter how such historically contingent and socially constructed ideas and institutions are important for understanding the relationship between structure and agency. Indeed, perhaps above all else it has been the scope and extent of institutional transformation which has swept through domestic and international politics since the 1960s that has, in turn, transformed the study of politics and IR/IPE.

However, the fundamental role which ideas and ideology have played in the nature of these transformations has been almost entirely, but not completely, overlooked by many neoliberal institutionalists. Some neoliberal institutionalists such as Keohane pay some lip service to ideas and interpretation, acknowledging that “much behaviour is recognised by participants as reflecting established rules, norms and conventions, and meaning is interpreted in light of these understandings” (1989: 1). Indeed, Keohane made some concessions to what he terms the

Suganami. These English School theorists can also be shown to connect with elements of historical sociology (Hobden 2002 pp51-53)

reflectivist approach but remains sceptical and suggests that these “will remain on the margins of the field, largely invisible to the preponderance of empirical researchers, most of whom explicitly or implicitly accept one or another version of rationalistic premises” (Keohane 1989: 173). In order to make a case for more culturally oriented interpretivist accounts of world politics, it is therefore necessary to expose the shortcomings of the rationalist approaches which continue to dominate the field.

Even where ideas have been considered, the positivist, materialist and rationalist bias has in many ways limited their use and efficacy in a way that has not so hindered more critical forms of constructivist theorising. Much analysis which goes under the label of constructivism has been reluctant to abandon the foundational basis for knowledge in the study of the social and human worlds, perhaps in a well-intentioned effort to engage more fully with the mainstream/malestream. As a result it is difficult to regard constructivism as a coherent whole, as representing a significant challenge to orthodox, positivist foundationalism as much of its insight has been absorbed within that corpus.

The concept of interests, traditionally the national variety, have long been a fundamental aspect of IR across the epistemological and methodological divides. Indeed, it has been celebrated by realist champions as “the main signpost that helps political realism through the landscape of international politics,” (Morgenthau, 1978:5). Others also see the varied approach to interests as a key determinant of constructivist and non-constructivist approaches. Goldstein (2005: 126) for example suggests that the difference between constructivism and other approaches is that constructivists are concerned with the construction of interests while other approaches see them as fixed and given. The case here is overstated though. Many non-constructivists are interested in how actors come to hold the interests which shape their decision-making (eg. Moravcsik, 1999).

Neoliberal institutionalism

Concurrent to the gradual awakening of IR to critical and constructivist currents in Social Theory through the 1980s and 90s, neoliberal institutionalism became the major alternative to neorealism, as illustrated in the interminable 'neo-neo debates'. As a result there is sometimes confusion between what constitutes the so-called 'third debate' in IR, whether it is a debate between positivist and post positivist (constructivist) accounts of world politics or simply a narrower debate between neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism. Illustrative of this confusion, some scholars have attempted to show that there is in fact little difference between neoliberal institutionalism and constructivism. Sterling-Folker (2000) suggests that there is a common functionalism shared between liberal theories of IR and constructivism.

In each case an exogenous interest is posited and what follows is a story about the social construction of institutional preferences derived from a functional-institutional logic. This necessarily leads constructivist accounts onto the same post hoc explanatory and predictive track as functionalism. (108)

The reasons behind Stirling-Folker's argument are twofold. Firstly, the examples of constructivism which she chooses (eg. Wendt, Ruggie, Katzenstein) reside squarely in what Hopf (1998) would identify as the conventional end of the constructivist spectrum and represent a form of constructivist scholarship more common to the US, a decidedly 'thin' variant. In fact, despite Wendt's widely cited 'constructivist' challenge to the mainstream, "by any conventional definition of constructivism, [he] is no constructivist" (Hay 2002: 199; and see also Smith 2000). Wendt's position can be demonstrated as both ontologically realist and even at times (epistemologically) positivist. Secondly, the version of neoliberal institutionalism considered is a rather sophisticated one which seems to have incorporated some insights from more interpretivist approaches. Indeed, the work of March and Olsen (1998) features heavily in Sterling-Folker's account as indicative of

the assumptions of neoliberal institutionalism. However, their own account which combines a rationalist 'logic of consequences' with a more normatively based 'logic of appropriateness' (which as they stress weighs more heavily in their work) is a more nuanced, sophisticated and contingency-based approach than that which might be said to characterise most neoliberal and rationalist forms of institutionalism (Lowndes, 2010: 66).

This conflation of conventional or 'thin' constructivism with neoliberal institutionalism also stems partly from attempts by some neoliberal institutionalists to incorporate a role for ideas into their explanations of world politics, but they have done so in a quite limited fashion. Drawing rather narrowly upon Weberian perspectives, where material and ideal interests rather than ideas themselves are considered to determine human conduct, "yet, very frequently the 'world images' that have been created by 'ideas' have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest" (Weber in Gerth and Mills 1948: 280). In essence then, neoliberal institutionalism, like neorealism considers the behaviour of agents, individual or collective, to be predominantly determined by exogenous material factors and ideational considerations are at best minimal (see also Adler, 1997: 322). The result remains a firmly rationalist account of institutional design and change, despite its notable improvement on neorealism in terms of its ontological concession to non-state actors and the beliefs held by individuals. However, the way in which individuals beliefs can affect policy preferences and outcomes are explained as resulting from the rationally guided and economically driven choices of individuals (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993: 3).

In outlining and developing my own approach I will challenge this position by suggesting that a form of constructivism which is able to stand outside, and thereby challenge, the rationalist assumptions of the mainstream institutionalist approaches must express more explicitly its critical and normative components. This should acknowledge that much scholarship which has gone under the

name of constructivism (and has been largely responsible for its success as a formidable challenge to mainstream IR/IPE) has retained residues of rationalist and positivist foundations. Before outlining a fuller account of critical constructivism, we need a clearer picture of the positivist and rationalist accounts of world politics against which it is contrasted, particularly those which claim to explain the institutional frameworks that structure and are structured by those processes.

It should be clarified here that neoliberal institutionalism is only one facet (albeit a defining one) of the academic approach in IR generally known as neoliberalism (Sterling-Folker 2010). I use the term neoliberal institutionalism for two important reasons. Firstly, to emphasise the focus upon the institutional frameworks which undergird processes, practices and organisations of global governance and governmentality. Secondly, I wish to avoid confusion between neoliberalism as an academic approach in IR and neoliberalism as a set of practical policy preferences and proposals that are seen to represent a dominant ideology and discourse regarding globalisation and how societies must respond to them. The former then is a more analytical category which seeks to describe and explain aspects of world politics, which it does through a predominantly rational institutionalist perspective. The latter is a more normative collection of ideas and policy prescriptions which not only attempt to describe how individuals and societies function at a basic level, but how these fundamental assumptions transpose certain necessary conditions for the maximisation of economic and political freedom for individuals. As one might expect however, the differences hold only up to a point. I present a brief outline of neoliberal institutionalism below and the connections which can be identified with neoliberal policies more generally, while a separate and more detailed account of the emergence of neoliberal ideology is presented in chapter six. Despite these important distinctions then, both 'neoliberalisms' share a root in the neoclassical economics of the 19th century marginalists and the rational choice perspective which has come to dominate political science and IR/IPE.

Neoliberal institutionalism has been possibly the most widespread academic response in the field of IR/IPE to political globalisation and the growth of global governance, particularly in the US. It has become popular partly as a response to the declining popularity of neorealism, whose theories had some difficulty in accounting for the apparent rise in cooperation and collaboration between states which appeared to show that international society was becoming less anarchic. While neorealists regard anarchy as an unchanging condition that defines the international environment and which all agents in the system are subject to, neoliberal institutionalists have drawn attention to processes of change in the international environment and “see anarchy as a vacuum that is gradually being filled with human-created processes and institutions” (Sterling-Folker, 2010: 119). Of particular note is the propensity of the most powerful and wealthy states in advanced capitalist societies (SIACS) to be some of the most enthusiastic proponents of greater cooperation and the creation of more concrete and powerful regimes, institutions and organisations through which to coordinate foreign policy-making and respond collectively to issues and problems which have appeared increasingly transnational in scope. Peripheral and postcolonial states have been less instrumental in the establishment of institutions of global governance but are no less, and perhaps even more, subject to them.

The institutional arrangements now widely referred to as global governance emerged almost exclusively since the end of WWII. The overarching power of the US in the post-war system allowed it to shape the international system significantly in its own interests which were perceived to be a free trade, capitalist system which would provide international markets for the export of US manufactures. As a result of the boom in industrial production during the war, the US had a surplus manufacturing capacity which needed an ever growing number of consumers in order to survive. Its preponderance of economic power was matched by an overwhelming military power and as a result of this superpower status it was able and more than willing to assume the role of a global

hegemon. This came to be known in IR theory as hegemonic stability theory and marked an early challenge to the dominant status of neorealist explanations of world politics.

Following World War Two, the establishment of the United Nations (UN) was, initially at least, a normative set of relatively loose institutional arrangements while the Bretton Woods Institutions were more formal and, along with the Marshall Plan, had a more direct, immediate and concrete effect on the foreign policy and behaviour of states. In recent decades, even with the relative decline in the power of the US, these institutional arrangements or 'regimes' have come to work more closely together across a range of issues in world politics. Environmental issues such as acid rain, damage to the ozone layer and climate change are cited as early stimuli to such enhanced coordination and cooperation. Organised crime, human rights, security and 'terrorism' have since been given prominence among neoliberal institutionalists and regime theorists. As I will attempt to show however, the emergence of these institutions and regimes would not have been likely, or even possible, without the earlier and more significant institutionalisation of worldwide economic interests among and between increasingly globalised capitalist elites and class fractions (van der Pijl 1998; Gill 2004). Neoliberal institutionalism can be seen then as the need for realists to revise their theories to account for the emergence of a liberal trading order and the multiple and complex legal regimes which are necessary to secure that order.

Global governance now represents an almost seamless web in which aspects of policy-making decisions over a range of 'problems' such as development, environment, security, human rights, crime, trade, finance, are relinquished by states. The transfer, or at least extension, of this policy formulation and regulation to transnational institutions is matched by the increased role for private institutions both within and beyond the state. States remain powerful actors but the institutional arrangements within them are transformed in the process of promoting globalisation (Sorenson 2006). In particular, formerly public and democratically accountable bodies are transferred to the

private sector. International accords such as the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) limits states abilities to control who can bid for contracts to run formerly public services. Outside the state, the expansion of private authority is most visible in the proliferation of Non-governmental organisations, what has come to be known as Global Civil Society (GCS). This activity is couched in euphemisms such as deregulation, harmonisation, and cooperation. In reality, regulation has shifted to private authority and the discipline of capital, cooperation is between state and corporate elites, and any kind of global harmony seems in very short supply. In particular, many people have noted the democratic deficit which results from these institutional transformations, both between and within states (Beder 2010). Indeed, Moravcsik poses this as “the central question in contemporary world politics” (2004: 336). Sufficient regulation is considered to be provided by technical experts and managers in the political realm and by the supposed natural equilibrium that is argued to result from the so-called ‘self-regulating market’. Any kind of substantive, let alone deliberative democratic governance is simply not on the neoliberal agenda. Indeed, Harvey notes that:

Neoliberal theorists are profoundly suspicious of democracy. Governance by majority rule is seen as a potential threat to individual rights and constitutional liberties. Democracy is viewed as a luxury only possible under conditions of relative affluence coupled with a strong middle class presence to guarantee political stability. Neoliberals therefore tend to favour governance by experts and elites. A strong preference exists for government by executive order and by judicial decision rather than democratic and parliamentary decision-making. Neoliberals prefer to insulate key institutions, such as the central bank, from democratic pressures. (2007: 66)

As an illustration, the UK in recent decades has seen a growth in the power of the executive in relation to Parliament, begun with Thatcher and continued with the Blair/Brown administrations. One of the first policies to be implemented by the Blair government after their election in 1997 was

to hand over control of interest rates to an independent Bank of England. The policies followed by New Labour from 1997 differed only in style from the previous conservative administrations.

Indeed, in what remains of the democratic structures of many nation states, a perceived need to follow a particular set of neoliberal policies in government has rendered any meaningful choice between different political programmes in national elections all but redundant. What is considered to matter now is the ability to respond to the perceived exigencies of global capital mobility through effective 'management' of the economy in the wider interests of capital. In a speech to the French National Assembly in 1998, Tony Blair announced that "There is no right or left Politics in the globalised economy of today. There is only good or bad politics." Policy is increasingly determined by private interests of global finance and business. As the state is perceived to 'hollow-out' politically, private power is keen to fill the void. David Rockefeller (1999: 41) wrote in *Newsweek* that business people favour "lessen[ing] the role of government" but that this means that "somebody has to take government's place, and business seems to me to be a logical entity to do it" (cited in Chomsky, 2000: 117) . States as institutions of regulation may not be losing power *per se*, but the interests who wield that power appear to be narrowing in an undemocratic direction.

In the study of Politics and IR/IPE, neoliberal institutionalism and its domestic variant rational choice institutionalism take these processes as its objects of analysis, subjecting them to detailed description and providing a wide range of sophisticated explanations for their emergence and development. Rarely however, are they subjected to any critical scrutiny. It is only the self-interests of states and citizens-consumers which are of concern. The analysis is not always as 'neutral' as it would like to portray.

Neoliberal institutionalists then are variously but in general enthusiastic about the process of globalisation, regarding it as spreading liberal values of democracy and human rights. Indeed, neoliberal institutionalism represents an important element of the hyperglobalist thesis (see Held

et al 1999: 3-5; Marsh *et al* 2006: 172-173). Economic globalisation is seen to be inevitable and beneficial to all in the long run as it encourages the expansion of markets and is thus seen as crucial for economic growth. The institutions of globalisation are seen to promote the spread of technology and knowledge around the world. The wealthy countries and TNC's are encouraged to seek investment in the poorer parts of the world thus promoting development and alleviating poverty (providing these states accept the neoliberal restructuring necessary). Free trade is considered beneficial to the economic system in security terms based on the widespread belief that protectionism was a root cause of the economic crises which led to the rise of fascism in Europe and the outbreak of war in 1939. Finally, as the role for government is reduced, the potential for the corruption of public officials is considered to be reduced. As this theory goes, the increased wealth generated by the expansion of material wealth will 'trickle down' to those poorest individuals and societies at the bottom of the scale (Aghion and Bolton 1997). However, the evidence for any widespread distribution of the benefits of this system of institutional arrangements is extremely scarce and levels of inequality have been rising across many indices for the last four decades of neoliberal policies (see Wade 2008: 386-403; Milanovic 2005, Navarro 2007). The fundamental argument of neoliberalism is that unrestricted free trade promotes economic growth. This much is perhaps true but the second assumption, that this 'rising tide will lift all boats', benefitting society as a whole, is demonstrably untrue. Barker and Mander show that the evidence thus far indicates that "it lifts only yachts" (1994: 4). And as Louis Pauly notes, only "stable growth, with its fruits shared widely is conducive to harmony. Unstable growth, a concentration of wealth and an unresponsive government, conversely, cannot help but work in the opposite direction (1997: 15).

This is starkly illustrated by the global financial meltdown of 2008 and subsequent global recession. Lysandrou (2011) shows that the underlying cause for the crisis was not the careless issue of credit in the form of sub-prime mortgages, nor was it the complex financial procedures which hid these

delinquent securities in collateralized debt obligations. While these financial products and procedures eventually facilitated the crash, they were themselves a by-product of increased demand for yield on the part of institutional investors. In short, there had been in the late 1990's and early 2000's, a massive accumulation and concentration of wealth in pension, insurance and mutual funds; commercial banks who had moved into the asset management business as a result of changes in household savings patterns; emerging market economies (eg. China) whose investment in newly created sovereign wealth funds was combined with their increased holdings of US treasuries; and finally the growth in high net worth individuals and their need to invest their colossal incomes with maximum yield. The creation of new and less secure financial derivatives was more than anything a rational response to the demand of this over accumulation of unproductive capital. Lysandrou concludes that "Marx was right. Exploitation and wealth inequality are usually the root cause of crises in a commodity producing system, and so also were they at the root of this global financial crisis." (2011:510). Such an argument does not excuse or ignore the numerous errors and failings on the part of the institutions which created and supplied these dangerous financial products. But according to Lysandrou, these were merely amplifiers which brought the inevitable crisis to fruition in the way it did. "The causal factors lay outside of the financial sector, in the growth of wealth inequality that had been allowed to reach unsupportable proportions by the early part of this century" (2011:511).

As a result, there seems little doubt that neoliberal policies fail to match the claims made by the academic arguments. The global neoliberal order seems to represent an increasingly volatile and precarious existence for the majority world.²⁴ Considering the instability, precarity and threat to widespread long-term human security, we are forced to return to the question of interests.

²⁴ For a good empirical analysis of the relationship between equality and social stability see Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) *The Spirit Level* Also Jackson, T. (2009) *Prosperity without Growth* demonstrates persuasively why a free market economy and neoliberal policies are anathema to sustainability, economically or ecologically.

Neoliberal institutionalists suggest states have entered into these arrangements in the pursuit of their 'self-interests' but it seems a number of important questions remain regarding such a claim. How can the powerful be trusted represent the interests of the weak? How can long-term social interests be reconciled with short term individual preferences? Perhaps most importantly, how do actors come to formulate their interests in the first place and to what extent is such a process context dependent?

As I have stated, neoliberalism explains the emergence and expansion of institutions of global governance and the privatisation of state institutions as a supposedly *rational* response by states and consumers to market forces and the supposedly inevitable, inexorable and thus unquestioned 'reality' of globalisation. States are assumed to respond universally in the same way as a rational response to this objective reality because it is considered to be in their self-interest to do so. What unites neoliberal ideology and its academic analytical fig-leaf then is a belief in the notion of self-interest as an explanatory causal mechanism, for it is both an ideology and a theoretical approach based on theories of rational or public choice. We can learn a lot more about both from a discussion and critique of those underlying theories.

Rationalism in the Social Sciences and IR

Perhaps the most popular collection of theories and approaches which might be deployed in an attempt to explain processes of globalisation, understood as the transformation of the state, the establishment of a global market society and the rising salience and power of transnational institutions and actors, are grouped under the term rational or public choice theory (RPCT). Public choice theory is really a subset of rational choice theory which works on the assumption that politicians and governments will pursue their own specific interests of seeking or staying in office

and extending the areas of their own vested interests (McAnulla, 2002). This has been widely used to justify the neoliberal policies of deregulation, privatisation sometimes referred to as 'rolling back the state'.

As a result, it is important to consider, review and critique these approaches as adequate analytical and explanatory tools for understanding the rise, nature and effects of neoliberal ideology and the institutional consequences of their emergence to dominance. This is due to the fact that they in themselves represent an important aspect of neoliberalism in that they constitute a central philosophical foundation of liberal (or bourgeois) social science. It is a complex task as it might be possible that the growth in popularity of RPCT is part and parcel of this changing order of discourse. Challenging neoliberal ideology then requires a challenge to the undergirding assumptions of RPCT.

RPCT represents an impressive theoretical edifice in the social sciences. In the USA in particular, RPCT's have grown in popularity to dominate the discipline of politics and IR/IPE. From quite humble and marginal beginnings in the 1950's, and the ground-breaking work of Kenneth Arrow (1951) and Antony Downs (1957), RPCT's of various hues have become an almost defining approach to Political Science. Their influence has waned slightly in the last decade under the increased criticisms of post-positivist, post-structuralist and in particular constructivist analysis, but still retaining a powerful hold across the social sciences. During this period, their influence has also been strong in the UK and to a slightly lesser extent across continental Europe.

The assumptions of rational choice theory which dominate much institutional scholarship and in particular neoliberal institutionalism in IR/IPE, have their origins in neo-classical economics²⁵ and the 19th century Marginalist revolution associated with Stanley Jevons, Leon Walras, Carl Menger,

²⁵ For a discussion of neo-classical economics see <http://www.paecon.net/PAEReview/issue38/ArnspergerVaroufakis38.htm>

and later, Ludwig von Mises.²⁶ One of the important aspects of this school was the claim to isolate the scientific study of economics from the philosophy of classical political economy. The liberal political element, they argued, should be jettisoned in order to establish the study of economics as a purely neutral and objective pursuit in the fashion of the natural sciences. This myth of economics as devoid of politics is mirrored by the assumptions of RPCT in politics and IR/IPE, whereby society as a collective agent is removed from the analysis of individual self-interested action, calculating and acting only upon perceived assessments of utility. The assumption of utility maximisation, central to RPCT, elicits a theory of action or agency which is entirely devoid of contextual considerations in so far as the agent is completely removed from the social relations in which she is embedded.

This is a rather curious assumption as it is difficult to think empirically about how humans might possibly come to have a sense of themselves in isolation of any social context. Our judgment of what is in our interest, what is therefore rational, must to a considerable extent depend on some expectation or calculation of how others will respond to our action. I will return to this conundrum in the criticisms below, following a brief definition of the core elements of RPCT.

Andrew Hindmoor (2006a) identifies five guiding principles or assumptions of RPCT: Methodological individualism, the use of deductive models, rationality, self-interest and subjectivism. I will address these in turn and provide some reasons why they are suspect or limited in their claims.

Methodological individualism. At the root of RPCT's events and processes and outcomes are explained in terms of the beliefs and interactions of individual actors. According to Almond (1991) this "argues that all social phenomena are derivable from or can be factored into, the properties

²⁶ Mises in Particular was to have a profound impact on the thinking of Hayek and the neoliberal revolution discussed in more depth in Chapter 7.

and behaviour of individuals” (1991: 38). While it is recognised that structures may determine the range of opportunities available to individuals, social and political outcomes are explained entirely in terms of agents choices. It is therefore a form of intentionalism (McAnulla, 2002: 276-277).

RPCT does not really have a well-developed theory of the relationship between structures and agents. It is most often assumed to be an atomistic theory of human behaviour due to its methodological individualism. However, Hay (2002: 103-104) notes that there is in fact a quite rigid and indeed necessary structuralism inherent in RPCT, a kind of radical determinism, but not one which is external as such. In any given or prescribed circumstance, only one course of action is considered possible within a specific set of preferences. As a result, the agent is both free to choose, but constrained by the assumption of supposedly internal rationality. In fact, as Watson notes, “the choices described by rational choice theory are not really choices at all in the literal sense of the word because they do not follow a process of reflection about how best to orient behaviour in the context of social relationships in which is contemplated” (2008: 58). It might be said that RPCT demonstrates the most problematic aspects of both intentionalism and structuralism as a result of its attempt to circumvent the very difficult questions of how these aspects of society are related.

The denial or radical restriction of agency means that the supposed correlation between free markets and free autonomous individuals is rendered somewhat problematic. The assumption that a truly democratic society of ‘free’ individuals is only possible with a free market capitalist economy, as runs the mainstream neoliberal justification for ‘deregulation’ and privatisation, becomes highly suspect. The paradox is explicitly celebrated by the neoliberal theorist F.A. Hayek himself: “freedom to order our own conduct in the sphere where material circumstances force a change upon us” (1944: 157). The articulation of a theoretical *and* a normative commitment to individualism is thus revealed at the root of RPCT.

Deductive models. Rather than gathering information about processes, events etcetera and identifying interesting correlations and patterns therein as an inductive process, deductive models, as used in RPCT, make assumptions about the way in which actors will behave in a given situation and then uses largely quantitative data to deductively ascertain the accuracy of their models. It is this aspect which most effectively reveals the attempt by RPCT's to mirror the methods of the natural sciences and to attain credibility through the ability to make predictions about social and political outcomes. Some of the most popular means by which these models are constructed are through various structured games such as the prisoner's dilemma. The purpose of the prisoner's dilemma game is to demonstrate why egotistic and rational utility-maximising actors will tend to cooperate in conditions of uncertainty. Its predictive power is impressive and these games undoubtedly represent a valuable contribution to the study of politics and IR/IPE. However, this can be seen as problematic on a number of levels.

Firstly, there is little attention given to the reasons *why* actors will behave in a certain way given a particular set of given circumstances beyond the claim that they are simply rational and self-interested (on which more below). These identities are simply given and their origins are not up for consideration. As a result as soon as one concedes the specific conditions and parameter of the game, the outcome must automatically be accepted. According to Smith (2004), the key point however, is "the ability of the analysts to define a given problem as a prisoners' dilemma game. Once that is said then there is no way of coming to anything other than the finding that both actors end up in a worse situation than they need be" (Smith 2004: 502). Smith suggests that we consider also the important elements which are missing from the game, the heavily constrained and restrictive nature of its parameters: "the actors cannot communicate; there is no shadow of the future; we know nothing of their prior relationship; we do not know if they are guilty; we do not

know if they know they are in a prisoners' dilemma" (2004: 502).²⁷ Smith's final criticism is the recognition that in following the deductive methods of the natural sciences, the analyst claims to observe the social world in which she is embedded from a completely neutral 'Archimedean point'. There is no concession to the possibility that the analysts own prejudice or prior experiences might affect the way that the game is constructed and the results are interpreted. This desire to escape or deny the effects social and political milieu in which all humans are embedded is another aspect of RPCT which connects it to liberal and neoliberal assumptions about politics and the world.²⁸ These ideologies are also inherently "committed to finding an analytically external standpoint from which to evaluate society as a whole" (Grafstein, 1990: 177).

Rationality. As one might expect, the assumption of rationality lies at the heart of RPCT. As noted above, the deductive methodology on which RPCT is based assumes that all human beings act rationally, but what does this mean exactly, how can such a claim be justified? According to Hindmoor (2006a: 181), RPCT is based on a concept of instrumental rationality in which "actions are judged as being rational to the extent that they constitute the best way of achieving some goal". Hindmoor in fact identifies two slightly different approaches to the concept of rationality. The first 'axiomatic approach', is rooted in a psychological behaviourism and is therefore more firmly in line with the prescriptions of neo-classical economics. As such this is a more instrumental approach which, despite being more accurate in its predictions, is less accurate in the realism of their

²⁷ It should be noted that games have also been developed to disprove many assumptions of RPCT (eg Camerer and Thaler 1995) and see below.

²⁸ However, some rational choice theorists Such as Adam Pzeworski (1986) and Jon Elster (1985) have applied similar methods in Marxian analyses of politics. Elster claims that "Marxist theory will prove incapable of fruitful development without an explicit espousal of methodological individualism" (1982: 124) It is worth noting however that Elster's position appears to have shifted away from some of the fundamentals of RPCT (1993): "I now believe that rational-choice theory has less explanatory power than I used to think. Do real people act on the calculations that make up many pages of mathematical appendices in leading journals? I do not think so. ... There is no general nonintentional mechanism that can simulate or mimic rationality. ... At the same time, the empirical support ... tends to be quite weak" (2007: 5, 25ff). G.A. Cohen's Marxism also demonstrates a fundamentally individualist bias but is perhaps not strictly speaking a rational choice approach.

assumptions. An illustration of this trade-off is the work of neoliberal economist Milton Friedman who claimed that “the only relevant test of the validity of a hypothesis is comparison of its predictions with experience. [...] Factual evidence can never “prove” a hypothesis, it can only fail to disprove it, which is what we mean when we say, somewhat inexactly, that the hypothesis has been ‘confirmed’ by experience” (Friedman 1953: 7-8). The quote demonstrates once again how RPCT draws significantly from neoliberal economic theory and the radical level of theoretical abstraction which characterises this approach. Indeed, the main basis for Green and Shapiro’s detailed criticisms are that despite its supposed scientific credibility:

The weaknesses of rational choice scholarship are rooted in the characteristic aspiration of rational choice theories to come up with universal theories of politics. This aspiration leads many rational choice theorists to pursue ever more subtle forms of theory elaboration with little attention to how these theories might be operationalized and tested—even in principle. When systematic empirical work is attempted by rational choice theorists it is marred by a series of characteristic lapses that are traceable to the universalist ambitions that rational choice theorists mistakenly regard as the hallmark of good scientific practice. These pathologies manifest themselves at each stage of theory elaboration and empirical testing. (1994:6)

I do not mean to suggest that empirical methods are always and everywhere a byword for good political or social research, indeed, *empiricist* methods can bend the stick too far in the other direction of a theoretical deficit and the fundamental assumption of this thesis is that the meaning of ‘reality’ is ideationally and discursively constituted and shaped. The importance of Green and Shapiro’s criticisms however, is that they do not just highlight those aspects of politics which RPCT explicitly ignores or discounts, such as ideas, norms, values, beliefs, discourses. In fact they demonstrate that RPCT’s are found to be substantially lacking in areas which they claim as their strengths. Again according to Green and Shapiro, “they have either failed on their own terms or garnered theoretical support for propositions that, on reflection, can only be characterised as

banal: they do little more than restate existing knowledge in rational choice terminology” (1994: 6).

In response to the radical instrumentalism which characterises much RPCT and which Green and Shapiro target in their critical analysis, Hindmoor identifies an ‘optimising approach’ (2006: 191). This approach to rationality involves a more nuanced and qualified analysis which considers more carefully the processes of deliberation and reason which precede any particular action. Drawing on the work of Searle (1995, 2001) and Sen (2003), Hindmoor suggests that it is humans’ capacity to deliberate and reason which permits them to act in optimal ways. However, the supposed costs in time and effort and in some cases emotional stress and mental anguish lead them to regard this process as something they wish to limit or economize, at least in some cases. As a result it becomes possible to see why humans may sometimes *act* in *sub-optimal* ways as they do not always fully consider the full ramifications of their choices or actions. According to Hindmoor then “people will only invest in the exercise of deliberative rationality up to that point where the marginal benefits of doing so are greater than the marginal costs (2006: 192). Beyond this, any further deliberation becomes sub-optimal even assuming that doing so might lead them to act in a more optimal manner. Hindmoor summarises his argument thus: “Rational people will not always act in optimal ways because doing so will require a sub-optimal investment in deliberation” (2006: 192). Rationality then for Hindmoor is a substantially ‘bounded’ concept. This concept deserves a brief summary.

According to Monroe (1991: 6), bounded rationality accepts the assumptions of individuals’ self-interestedly and consciously pursuing goals common to all RPCT. The concept of rationality however is subjected to some careful qualifications in response to the various ways which actors may often not appear to act rationally. In this account, greater emphasis is placed upon constraints which stem from both the external context and the computational capacities of the actor.

Behaviour then, is seen to be more adaptive. Actors are seen to possess limited information and are often uncertain about the consequences of particular courses of action. Actors are considered as 'satisficers' in that they reach decisions once a satisfactory alternative is found. Such an alternative need only satisfy some minimum requirement and not necessarily the supposed optimal outcome. Substantial supplemental knowledge of the actor is needed in order to make any predictions about behaviour, in particular, information regarding the actor's goals and their conceptual orientation to the world. Finally, considerable emphasis is placed on the *process* of decision-making rather than the expected outcomes as discussed in Hindmoor's deliberative approach above. According to March and Olsen "theories of bounded rationality and ambiguity have resulted in significant modifications in the classical theory of rational instrumental action; but like the theories they criticize, they assume, for the most part, a logic of consequences" (1998: 950). The broader point is that RPCT is persuasive only as far as it qualifies and limits the extent of determinacy which it affords to the crude assumptions of rational, self-interested individuals as the sole explanatory factor in its theoretical toolbox. Nevertheless it attempts to retain a positivist and objectivist analysis which becomes increasingly difficult to sustain as the models are held up to real world situations.

As a result, while this bounded notion of rationality certainly makes the concept seem more plausible for political analysis, it also concedes significant ground to structural and ideational variables. A process of deliberation is difficult to comprehend other than as individuals negotiating and manoeuvring strategically within a set of material and ideational structures. These can only be the result of the actions and beliefs of other individuals therefore there must be some implicit concession to a dialectical notion of structure and agency. The necessary qualifications which are made in order to make RPCT more plausible can be seen to undermine the fundamental assumptions of the approach.

It is certainly reasonable to suggest that at least most people act rationally most of the time. However, what is considered to be a particular rational act in a given empirical situation is highly context specific. It is always, to employ a somewhat loaded term, relative. This is not to make the claim then that all possible positions or interests are relative, but that a credible account must couch claims for rationality carefully within a highly contingent historical, spatial, and psychological continuum. No account of politics can proceed in the complete absence of the notion of rationality, all thinking individuals make everyday judgements on the basis of the understanding that people act in what we assume to be more or less rational ways. If we did not assume this then we would be quite different creatures. This is a key point. In all kinds of ways, people *are* very different. If we travel to other places or read about people in history, we are often surprised or even disturbed by the diversity of human nature. There is indeed some kernel of rationality, but the interesting and important questions, I argue, relate to how different notions and constructions of rationality and the behaviour which results are constituted through a diversity of ideas and discourses.

Self-interests. The concept of interests is perhaps the most complex and controversial of the key principles of RPCT and a full discussion of the key political concept of interests in general is far beyond the remit of this work.²⁹ It is deeply connected with all the above principles but also, as discussed in chapter one, with the concept of power. Any discussion of interests in the absence of a consideration of the exercise of power is to severely limit such a discussion. If, as I argue, that power is unevenly distributed and that some concentrations of power might be able to affect how others come to perceive their interests, then an abstract or neutral conception of self-interest is problematic. It may be in the perceived interests of some agents with greater material or

²⁹ For an excellent critical discussion see Connelly, (1983: Ch. 2) and for a well reasoned argument for the identification of preferences and objective interests in relation to a Lukesian concept of political power, see Dowding 1991: Ch. 3

ideological resources to attempt to persuade or constrain the perceived interests of subordinate individuals in order maintain their social, cultural, economic and political advantage.

Moreover, even in hypothetical contexts of informational (but not quite material) parity, the assumption of self-interest can be shown to be quite limited. In the ultimatum game, two people, a proposer and a responder (P and R), are allotted a sum of money. In the game, P is given the initial task of offering a share of the money to R and R is aware of the percentage offered. If R accepts this share then P is granted the remaining share of the money. If R rejects the offer, neither player receives anything. If players were self-interested maximizers, as assumed in most accounts of RPCT (and that both players calculated on the basis of this assumption about the other player), then we would expect all or most P's to offer a minimum one per cent and for R's to accept the offer. In fact, when the game is played, "offers typically average about 30-40 per cent of the total, with a 50-50 split often the mode. Offers of less than 20 per cent are frequently rejected" (Camerer and Thaler 1995: 210).

Subjectivism (political individualism). The migration of RPCT from economics to politics has introduced a normative element into this school of thought which might be seen to begin to undermine some of its claims to objective 'scientific' credibility. Given the variously qualified and assumptions made about human nature and discussed above, RPCT argues that the criteria, by which institutions of government and governance should be judged, are the extent to which the satisfaction of the preferences of individuals are met. As such, the claims of RPCT to political neutrality and scientific objectivity are undermined. RPCT, like any theoretical approach to politics, must themselves be politically loaded. It is this way that RPCT have become almost part and parcel of the neoliberal project of reducing state bureaucracy and to 'set markets free'. According to Hay:

The ascendancy of a spectacular and normative neoliberalism in the late 1970s and 1980s was predicated on the success of the new right in mobilizing widespread perceptions of a crisis of

overload and ungovernability and that this narrative was, in turn, *premised upon the stylized rationalist assumptions of public choice theory* ... [these assumptions] ... (whether in the form of public choice theory, the rational expectations revolution or the hyperglobalization and structural dependence theses) have played a crucial role in this normalization and institutionalization of neoliberalism as a policy paradigm. (2004: 503-507ff, emphasis added)

As already stated, while it is important then, to distinguish the academic approach in IR/IPE known as neoliberal institutionalism and its core elements of RPCT, and the policy prescriptions associated with a political programme widely referred to also as neoliberalism, there are clearly some common roots in the doctrines of neoclassical economics associated with certain aspects of traditional liberal political theory. I have hinted at some of these connections above. In light of these clear connections between theory and policy, Archer and Tritter ask whether “the growing influence of this approach in international and financial institutions such as the OECD, the World Bank and the IMF, is now shaping larger tracts of the world in line with the theory” (2000: 11). There is indeed some considerable evidence to suggest that the widespread dissemination of the assumptions of individual self-interest central to neo-classical economics and RPCT has a discernible effect on how people subsequently respond to decision-making situations. One key assumption of these doctrines is that, as supposed self-interested utility maximizers, individuals will display a strong tendency to ‘free ride’ in social situations where collective action is required. It is reasonable to consider the extent to which students exposed to these doctrines might begin to internalise them as part of their consciousness and decision-making processes.

In a series of experiments carried out by Marwell and Ames (1981) to test the free rider theory popular in RPCT and also in neoliberal arguments for privatisation and deregulation, members of the public were found to have a much greater willingness to contribute to group returns in a shared investment than a group of graduate economics students. In responding to questions about their opinions on fairness these respondents (the economics graduates) were also unusually evasive and

obtrusive in their answers. A significant number even simply ignored these questions and “those who did respond were much more likely to say that little or no contribution was ‘fair’. In addition, the economics graduate students were about half as likely as other subjects to indicate that they were ‘concerned with fairness’ in making their investment decision” (Marwell and Ames 1981: 309). In addition, during discussions preceding the experiment, a sample of several famous economists were asked to provide estimates about what level of self-sacrifice the sample group might demonstrate in the invitation to choose between guaranteed individual returns, or potentially higher returns based on the possibility other group members would not ‘free ride’. The estimates of these economists were significantly lower than the results of the actual experiments demonstrated. While they predicted a very strong free rider effect, the results demonstrated a very weak effect. Marwell and Ames conclude that:

economists may be selected for their work by virtue of their preoccupation with the ‘rational’ allocation of money and goods. Or they may start behaving according to the general tenets of the theories they study. Confronted with a situation where others may not behave rationally, they nevertheless behave the way good economic theory predicts. (1981: 309)

It is possible to see how the effect of these theories and doctrines is much wider than the academic community. A more recent argument from Marglin (2008) suggests that the coherence of communities and individual identities has been destroyed by the growing reliance on free market mechanisms based on the assumptions of neoclassical economics applied to social policies:

In adopting an extreme form of individualism, in abstracting knowledge from context, in limiting community to the nation, and in positing boundless consumption as the goal of life, economics [and RPCT] offers us no way of thinking about the human relationships that are the heart and soul of the community other than as instrumental to the individual pursuit of happiness. Economics takes very much to heart the dictum of the nineteenth-century physicist Lord Kelvin that we know only what

we can measure. Indeed, economics takes the dictum a step further, from epistemology to ontology; what we can't measure—entities like community—doesn't exist. (Marglin, 2008: 9)

Indeed, the combined effect of the prevailing dominance of these two aspects of neoliberalism amounts to a kind of 'full spectrum dominance' across academic and policy-making circles and have even crept into mainstream popular public consciousness and discourses such as the valorisation of 'consumer choice' in a so-called economic democracy.³⁰ I argue that such discourses are themselves an ideological mystification which deploys a very limited concept of freedom in order to forestall arguments for progressive social change through an attempt to represent them as undemocratic. The assumptions of RPCT tend to lead to unrealistically static and rigid models of human behaviour which fail to account or allow for processes of historical institutional change. It is not difficult to see then why those in positions of status and power find them both persuasive and useful.

RPCT represents in many ways the diametric opposite to much of the argument developed in this thesis in that they do not sufficiently recognise how people might come to misperceive their interests, or at least sacrifice one set of interests for another.³¹ Indeed, the key problem is the tendency to take interests unquestionably as given, and not to inquire into their social origin or contextual variance. In fact, as what follows will attempt to demonstrate, "Interests do not exist, but constructions of interests do" (Hay 2011:79). Furthermore, analysis of those constructions

³⁰ An early proponent of these ideas was a founding member of the neoliberal movement, Ludwig von Mises. Mises (1931) who suggested that "The capitalistic market economy is a democracy in which every penny constitutes a vote. The wealth of the successful businessman is the result of a consumer plebiscite. Wealth, once acquired, can be preserved only by those who keep on earning it anew by satisfying the wishes of consumers. The capitalistic social order, therefore, is an economic democracy in the strictest sense of the word. In the last analysis, all decisions are dependent on the will of the people as consumers. Thus, whenever there is a conflict between consumers' views and those of the business managers, market pressures assure that the views of the consumers win out eventually" (p.158).

³¹ Although some predominantly rationalist scholars such as Douglass North (1990, chap.5) have attempted to introduce ideas and ideologies into their theories of institutional change. I would suggest that represents an increasing disenchantment with and abandonment of those methods rather than an actual reformulation of them in any satisfactory sense.

must attend to the distribution and deployment of power in society and the means by which such deployment is achieved.

Some of the most persuasive criticism of rational choice theory and the ones which perhaps inform this thesis most significantly are the sociologically and historically informed approaches relatively new to IR/IPE and institutional analysis more generally. In order then to provide the necessary theoretical and political corrective to the deficiencies and dangers of rational choice theories we need to develop an account of politics which is sufficiently critical to counter and delegitimise its neoliberal ideological component. This must combine with a social theoretical approach which provides an account of the way in which agents and structures constitute each other in a dialectical historical process.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced some of the ways in which mainstream IR/IPE has considered processes of institutional change. It has noted some of the developments which have taken place in that discipline as a result of those changes and has argued that despite these differences, mainstream IR/IPE in the form of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism has continued to demonstrate a reliance upon the assumptions of RPCT. The chapter has outlined the basic tenets of this body of theory and its connection with the institutional arrangements of the contemporary global political economy. The key purpose of this discussion has been to offer some criticisms of RPCT from a constructivist perspective. In so doing, I have suggested that the broad church represented by constructivism requires that we are more specific in our identification of the type of constructivism to be deployed in any analysis. I opt for an approach from the more critical and post-positivist end of the spectrum as I argue that this approach is best equipped for a critique of the rationalist

assumptions of both mainstream IR/IPE and the policymaking associated with institutions of GEG. In the following chapter I continue this theoretical development of the argument by introducing the historical and sociological approaches associated with what has come to be termed 'the new institutionalism'. These have combined to offer a new and welcome challenge to the dominance of rationalist approaches to the study of political institutions.

Ch. 3. New Institutionalism: Historical and Sociological Approaches

In addition to the influence of RPCT, neoliberal institutionalism should also be seen in the context of a much broader renewed focus on the importance of institutions in politics more generally referred to as the 'new institutionalism'. March and Olsen's (1984) article bearing the name is widely regarded as the watershed work for the return to a more considered and rigorous account of political institutions.³² They noted that while institutions had long been a central focus of the discipline of political science³³ and also represent important elements of such influential thinkers as Max Weber, Karl Marx and Karl Polanyi, "Social, political, and economic institutions have become larger, considerably more complex and resourceful, and *prima facie* more important to collective life" (ibid. 1984:734). As such it is important to provide some definition of what we mean by institutions. March and Olsen themselves have provided a broad yet detailed definition which is worth quoting here in full:

An institution is a relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals

³² Although it should be acknowledged that the English school of IR had throughout the 1960s and 70s, in the work of Hedley Bull (1977), Charles Manning (1962), Alan James (1969), Fred Northedge (1976) stressed the importance of a growing institutional framework underpinning an 'international society'. These scholars stressed the remarkable extent of order in international society considering the supposedly anarchical nature of that environment. It was Bull in particular who emphasised the *institutional* framework which underpinned this order. For an outline of the combined contributions of these thinkers see Suganami (1983). Tim Dunne (1995) has suggested the subjectivism of the English School, in particular Manning, Wight, Bull and Watson, marks them out as early 'classical' constructivists. See also the excellent review of the English school by Linklater and Suganami (2006).

³³ Traditional institutionalist approaches are associated with the comparative study of organisational elements such as constitutions, parties, judiciaries legislatures etcetera, rather than the state as a whole. See Finer 1962, Wilson 1956, Robson 1960, Polsby 1975. (Examples drawn from Lowndes in Marsh and Stoker 2010:63) also John Burgess and Weston Willoughby (mentioned in March and Olsen, 1984). The institutional and constitutional expertise of some of these thinkers (eg. Max Weber, Woodrow Wilson and Weston W. Willoughby saw their involvement in the drafting of various constitutional documents of the early 20th century.

and changing external circumstances. There are constitutive rules and practices prescribing appropriate behaviour for specific actors in specific situations. There are structures of meaning, embedded in identities and belongings: common purposes and accounts that give direction and meaning to behaviour, and explain, justify, and legitimate behavioural codes. There are structures of resources that create capabilities for acting. Institutions empower and constrain actors differently and make them more or less capable of acting according to prescriptive rules of appropriateness. Institutions are also reinforced by third parties in enforcing rules and sanctioning non-compliance. (March and Olsen 2006: 3)

Clearly and explicitly implicated in March and Olsen's definition of institutions are structural phenomena and the relative autonomy which agents or actors may have within the constraints and opportunities provided by those structures. Institutions are, more or less, structural phenomena embodying both material and ideational factors. As a result, an analysis of the relationship between structure, agency, ideas and 'the material' are required for any understanding of institutional objects and processes in politics and IR/IPE. This chapter discusses how these debates emerged and played out in the political disciplines and offers an account of how they might best be articulated in relation to each other.

It is beyond doubt that, since March and Olsen's initial response to these developments, institutions have become even more ubiquitous in social and political life, to the extent that Pierson and Skocpol suggest that essentially "we are all institutionalists now" (2002: 706). This may be true, but it is important to recognise the immense breadth of scope which institutional approaches occupy and to narrow the focus here accordingly. To describe one's focus as 'institutional' is to say very little about that focus, we must be more specific about the ways in which we can study how institutions emerge, operate, interact and change. Thelen and Steinmo (1992:7) suggested that there are essentially two approaches which have been assigned the label 'the new institutionalism', rational choice and historical institutionalism. While the picture has become more complicated with a range

of more diverse approaches, it is useful to begin with an outline this two way distinction.³⁴ Indeed, the newcomers might simply be regarded as important developments of and variations on these two key approaches.

There is perhaps some irony in the fact that March and Olsen's landmark study originally presented something of an early challenge to the stark reductionism of the dominant rationalist approach which characterised political science, considering that rational choice theorists have since come to assume such a large proportion of the new institutionalism. March and Olsen themselves retain a distinct rationalism in their claims that analysis should combine of a 'logic of consequences' with a 'logic of appropriateness', albeit with an emphasis on the latter (1998). While by no means abandoning their penchant for rationality as an important factor, March and Olsen have perhaps led the way in qualifying and even diluting the thick and rigid rationality that characterises much rational choice institutionalism. In particular, March (1978) was himself largely responsible for refining the crude assumptions of rational decision-making with the introduction of the concept of 'bounded rationality' in institutional analysis.

Fortunately, other parallel and subsequent theoretical developments have taken institutional approaches in less reductionist and more reflexive directions such as the sociological and historical approaches or 'historical sociology' and more recently, constructivist/discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2005, 2011; Hay 2011). Having already presented a critique of rationalist approaches, I now aim to develop the argument for a more critical constructivist approach which here draws in part on some of the contributions of historical and sociological approaches to the study of institutional change in IR/IPE.

³⁴ Hall and Taylor identified three key streams of the New Institutionalism and by 1999, Peters had managed to identify as many as seven variations. See also Lowndes (2010:64-66)

To some extent though, it is perhaps erroneous to include historical sociological approaches as part of the new institutionalism. Historical sociology has a long and rich history stretching back to the tumultuous revolutionary events of the eighteenth century which predates even the early political institutionalism of Weber, Wilson, Willoughby and Burgess (see Smith 1991). However, what may be regarded as a 'second wave' of historical sociology emerged just prior and parallel to March and Olsen's declaration of 'new' institutionalism, responding in a rather different way to a similar set of socio-economic and political developments. These historical sociologists built on the rich vein of historical sociology developed by earlier twentieth century writers such as Bendix (1951), E.P. Thompson and Eisensdadt (1963). The distinction between such so-called 'waves' might be seen as quite arbitrary and stems more from the work of writers such as Tilly, Mann, Skocpol (largely for an IR audience), Anderson, Wallerstein and Polanyi (more focussed on IPE) becoming of interest to the increasingly interdisciplinary and heterodox canon of those fields. One of the main lessons of Historical Sociology for the study of world politics then, has been to point out that the state as primary actor is by no means a given, and that to consider other social and political forms such as classes and empires is to provide a richer and more accurate account of the evolution, development and transformation of political institutions through history.

Many, but not all, of these historical sociologists, from both 'waves' displayed an attachment to the critical traditions of historical materialism (Comninel 2003). While these intellectual debts were not always explicit, they represent a nuanced and reflexive Marxism largely devoid of the economism which dogged some other examples of Marxist analysis. Having said this, there is a latent tendency toward structuralism which comes with this historical materialist backstory (Hobson 2002: 24) and is also evident in many accounts of sociological and historical institutionalism. (Hay 2002:105).

There are also some connections to be recognised here with the French *Annales* School and the work of Braudel and Bloch and the Durkheimian tradition (Burke 2003). In many ways then, historical sociology represents a long and seamless tradition of sociological (and often critical) analysis of large scale historical change which contains valuable methodological resources for the study of the institutional transformations associated with contemporary globalisation. While often structural in orientation, the sociological slant of this work has also helped draw attention to the significantly socialised nature of transnational social and political institutions, both transnational and domestic and “have served to highlight the importance of socially constructed norms, the social processes inherent in identity formation, culture and ideology, intersubjective understandings, and social structures in the study and practice of world politics” (Lawson 2006: 398).

Not only then has neo-Weberian historical sociology and constructivism helped re-introduce ideas and ideology into the mainstream debates of IR/IPE (Reus-Smit 2002) but in its call to ‘bring the state back in’ to analysis of world politics, it has made explicit the need for an account of the relationship between structure and agency (Hobson 2002). Such debates have emerged largely as an element of the constructivist turn since Wendt’s (1989) seminal *Social Theory of International Politics*.³⁵ As we have seen, such concerns have been largely absent from the dominant accounts of world politics (neorealism and neoliberalism) as indeed they have from all rationalist accounts of social and political science. However if we are to understand the complex nature of the relations of power between the state and globality, then the structure agency debates provide us with some considerable leverage. Indeed, our understanding of institutional change is dependent on, perhaps even definitive of, the relations of structure and agency in society. As Thelen and Steinmo claim,

³⁵ This greatly expanded and clarified his ideas on structure and agency in IR initially discussed in Wendt (1987)

institutional analysis [...] allows us to examine the relationship between political actors as objects and as agents of history. The institutions that are at the centre of historical institutionalist analysis [...] can shape and constrain political strategies in important ways, but they are themselves also the outcome (conscious or unintended) of deliberate political strategies of political conflict and of choice. (1992: 10)

In what follows I reiterate and further develop the critical and relational conception of power alluded to in chapter one, before outlining an account of structure and agency which helps elaborate that relational, structural and productive conception of power and its implications for human agency.

A 'Relational' Approach

As indicated in the introduction, this thesis is concerned primarily with the role of ideational factors *in relation* to structures of domination and the legitimization of changing distributions of power and authority in the global political system; how ideas constitute things or 'reality' by patterning them with layers of meaning. As such it is situated primarily in a debate around idealism and materialism. As Hall argues, "ideas have real power in the world but they do not acquire political force independently of the constellation of institutions and interests already present there" (1989: 390). Hall's quote is reminiscent of Marx's famous dictum that "men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past" ([1851] in McLellan 1977: 300).³⁶ The similarity of these dialectical positions illustrates how the

³⁶ The famous quote from Marx is more fairly attributable to earlier writers: "Montesquieu says that institutions mould men... This is true but it is also the fact that men make institutions" (Saint Simon in Suganami 1999: 376)

idealism/materialism relationship is itself intimately related to the broader ontological concern of the relative importance of structural and agential explanations for, and understandings of, processes of socio-historical change. Indeed, following Hay (2002: 209-210), I suggest that the importance of ideational factors and interpretive processes can be demonstrated by highlighting how they contribute to and help us understand the broader structure and agency relationship. They represent a vital element of the internal relations of power through which structures and agents mutually constitute and (re-)configure each other through history. The process is fundamental to an understanding of social, political, economic and cultural change. These ideas are expressed and realised in discourses and practices which authorise and legitimate, constrain and enable, particular ways of speaking and acting. Analysis of discourses can reveal the various proscriptions and permissions whereby some ideas gain currency and others are closed off. Indeed, according to Marsh:

The explanatory power lies with the consciousness of agents and the relative strategic, that is to a large extent discursive, context. As such we need to identify the contesting, and particularly the dominant, discourse(s), which shape, but of course don't determine, the context and therefore the outcome. (2010: 219)

In short, to what extent are ideas, which, I argue, must in some way precede and constitute social and political action, themselves at least partly the result of existing material and discursive contexts and structures of knowledge? In posing this question, we are assuming and alluding to a particular conceptualisation of power which is itself structural and productive in nature and is articulated within prevailing paradigms of knowledge and belief. This is related to what Foucault (1980:196-198) referred to as 'epistemes', that is:

the strategic apparatus which permits of separating out from among all the statements which are possible those that will be acceptable within [...] a field of scientificity, and which it is possible

to say are true or false. The episteme is the 'apparatus' which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterised as scientific.

(Foucault 1980: 197)

Structures are not necessarily material then. In fact, as Adler and Bernstein (2005: 295-6) argue, it is the structures of background knowledge, the epistemes through which actors construe their reality and classify nature and society, which represent some of the most powerful and important structures. These structures are not however all encompassing or determining, and should be regarded as relatively open fields in which possibilities for agency and transformation remain ever-present, albeit to varying degrees depending on the historical conjuncture of social relations. "Thus, even when resistance may appear futile or learning slow, the possibility of agency within, or in opposition to, global governance is always present, even if delimited by a prevailing episteme" (Adler and Bernstein 2005: 296).

When agents, structures and ideas are so inextricably intertwined, the difficulty lies in trying to disentangle them in order to identify opportunities and strategies for progressive agency, transformation and even emancipation for marginalised, subordinated and disenfranchised groups and societies. Attempts to simplify these internally related objects by ascribing mono-causal, unidirectional conditions, while tempting, will likely fail to understand the complexity and contingency of those relationships and limit the possibilities for understanding and thereby transforming them. Further problems arise when we consider that some of these institutions, such as states, organisations or classes, might be regarded as both agents and structures, depending on the so-called 'level of analysis'. In an effort to move beyond the problem of levels of analysis, and in order to comprehend the state/globality relation under conditions of neoliberal hegemony, these categories must remain open to structural *and* agential conceptions. They may act agentially, within broader structures and institutions, and they may impose their own structural or mechanical constraints and opportunities on the agency of smaller units and individuals. As Hay makes clear,

“it is in the dynamic *relationship between* levels of analysis and spatial scales that processes such as globalisation must be sought” (2001, n.p. emphasis added).

In this section then, we are moving tentatively from epistemological concerns of what constitutes acceptable or plausible grounds for making knowledge claims, to the more ontological matter of which elements of society and politics should represent the focus of study, how to classify them and how are they related within the entire system of global social relations. The distinctions only hold up to a point, as ontological and epistemological commitments are sometimes difficult to separate entirely (Smith 1996: 19; Dixon and Jones 1998: 250; Gregory 2000: 226; see also Bates and Jenkins 2007).

As I have already indicated, appreciation of the structure-agency-ideas nexus requires some further clarification of the notion of power introduced in chapter one. In distinction from the more overt external expressions of power characterised by direct compulsory or even institutional forms of power, structural power then refers to “the constitutive, internal relations of structural positions” (Barnett and Duvall 2005:18) which define the nature, character and therefore the perceived array of opportunities and constraints of human agents in the socio-political milieu. It is responsible for producing the capacities and interests of various subject positions in relation to each other. Importantly also, these relations also represent differential capacities for action held by the agents positions. It refers not simply to the institutional rules, norms and procedures which constrain the ability of agents to act in a certain way, although these are often closely related to or even regarded as aspects of structural power. More crucially, structural power alludes to a more hidden or internal relation which is directly constitutive of agents, so that one particular position in the social structure is occupied solely in relation to that of another position. Bhaskar illustrates this point with examples in the following manner:

A relation **RAB** may be defined as internal if and only if *A* would not be what it *essentially* is unless *B* is related to it in the way that it is. **RAB** is symmetrically internal if the same applies also to *B*. (*A* and *B* may designate universals or particulars, concepts or things, including relations.) The relation bourgeoisie-proletariat is symmetrically internal; traffic warden-state, asymmetrically internal; passing motorist-policeman not (in general) internal at all. (2005[1979]: 46)

Perhaps the best known examples of such structurally defined positions are those of master/slave or capital/labour relations. Such a perspective entails the mutual constitution of social agents in which they are directly and internally related to one another, each aspect can only exist in relation to the other. Their interests, subjectivities and capacities to act are conditioned by the social positions which they occupy. We can thus identify two ways in which such agents' conditions of existence are shaped by structural forms of power. Firstly, rather than generating equitable social privileges, differential advantages and capacities are allocated to particular positions as illustrated in the examples given above of master/slave and capital/labour relations. Secondly, it is not simply the capacities of agents which are constituted by the social structure; it is also their subjective interests, preferences and self-understandings. Consequently, structural power is able, in many instances, to conceal from agents their own domination in an unequal pattern of social relations. To the extent that this is so, the consciousness of agents and their dispositions for action tend to reproduce and even extend such unequal relations of power. Steven Lukes asks of such internally structured relations:

Is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial? (2005[1974]: 28)

Such structural aspects of power are clearly implicated, then, in the processes whereby a certain political and cultural system, informed and authorised by a particular set of ideas and norms, is legitimated and reproduced in order to foreclose possibilities for its potential subversion and transformation.

Closely related, and in some sense perhaps extending from structural power, is the notion of productive power identified in Barnett and Duvall's four way taxonomy (2005). While both of these types of power are concerned with the social production of agents' capacities and constraints, and the ways in which these shape the subjectivity, consciousness and corollary interests of those agents, productive power entails less direct and more diffuse and generalised social processes. Rather than an internal relation of mutual constitution between positions of super- and subordination as defined by structural power; productive power, by contrast, represents:

the constitution of all social subjects with various social powers through systems of knowledge, belief and discursive practices of broad and general social scope. Conceptually, the move is away from structures, per se, to systems of signification and meaning (which are structured, but not themselves purely material structures), and to networks of social forces perpetually shaping one another. (Barnett and Duvall, 2005:20)

Consider, for example, the money relation. It is in reality little more than a system of belief so deeply entrenched and widespread that the material and psychological costs of extricating oneself from this particular episteme appear too great for most individuals to conceive (see de Goede 2005: 165-169). Another example is the social construction of sovereignty (Biersteker and Weber 1996) where the legitimate right to exert physical force and violence is sanctioned by nothing more than an intersubjective agreement of mutual recognition. These can be seen as something more than structures in that they actively produce or generate 'practices' and forms of individual and social

behaviour and general understandings of it which come represent conventional wisdoms and 'common-sense'.

In the sense that this type of power extends beyond the structural form it may therefore be referred to as 'post-structural'. Rather than an alternative, it is possible to regard the more diffuse effects of productive power as extending, complementing and stretching out from the internal workings of structural power. As I will attempt to show through the following chapters, while the global capitalist relations of production continue to represent an internal constitutive structuring of subjects, as understood in Marxian analysis, we need also to account for and analyse the productive power of discourses which complement and feed back into the structural relations of capital and power. Productive power accounts for a more nuanced and open understanding of ideology and hegemony than provided for in the narrower, internal focus of structural power relations alone. According to Barnett and Duvall this stems from its wider attunement to "the boundaries of all social identity, and the capacity and inclination for action of the socially advantaged and disadvantaged alike, as well as the myriad social subjects which are not constituted in binary hierarchical relationships" (ibid.:21). As such, proponents of productive power are sceptical, but not entirely dismissive of some essential foundation at the root of the human subject.

This thesis argues that both structural and productive accounts of understanding power are required for an adequate analysis of neoliberal ideology and the ways in which it constitutes, legitimises and justifies the exploitation, alienation and socio-economic precarity which characterise the current systems of global governance. Furthermore, some attention must be afforded to the ways in which these forms of power are articulated and narrated in processes of neoliberal globalisation and attendant practices of neoliberal governmentality.

However, before doing so, it is necessary to frame these accounts of power with an ontological and epistemological account that re-examines the relationship between structure and agency. These

debates can be used to provide important theoretical insights into the problems of conceptualising domination and resistance and in addition, help to clarify the closely related and slightly narrower, more focussed dialectic of materialism and idealism. Only after covering this ground is it possible to examine the historical roots, emergence and contemporary workings of neoliberal ideology and its various discursive practices in some more detail.

Structuration and Beyond

There has long been a strong desire within social theory to attempt to solve the age old 'problem' of the supposed causal relationship between structure and agency. This desire reflects other wider, and equally long-standing philosophical concerns with a number of related and troublesome dualisms such as holism/atomism, determinism/voluntarism, objectivism/subjectivism and in particular as noted above, idealism/materialism. I aim to show how these debates lie at the heart of a project examining processes of domination and legitimation, as well as those attendant processes of dissent, resistance and spaces for potential transformation. Secondly, I will suggest that many established ways of approaching and dealing with these dualisms, and especially how they have been taken up relatively recently within the discipline of IR, offers only limited scope for answering the kind of questions thrown up by such a project. Indeed, answers or solutions may simply not be possible or realistic goals for such a question, but, I argue, their consideration, analysis and interpretation is unavoidable for the goal of better understanding in the social and human disciplines.

While concerns over the relative merits of structure and agency based approaches have lain at the heart of studies in history, social theory and sociology from their very origins, Politics and IR, in their combined sociological, linguistic and interpretive turns, have only relatively recently taken on these

questions as fundamental to their attempts to understand and explain locations and distributions of power in societies and systems. In the process they have inherited the ongoing debates and controversies in sociology which stretch back to the works of Marx, Weber and Durkheim.

Positions that have been taken up on either side of the debate as either intentionalism or structuralism are now widely seen to be somewhat anachronistic. The debates in Marxism during the 1970s between Althusserian structuralism and the more agency centred ethnomethodology of E. P. Thompson (McNally 1993) illustrate the sometimes caricatured extremes of this continuum. A related dialogue soon followed between the (initially at least) Althusserian Marxist, Nicos Poulantzas and the more instrumentalist Ralph Miliband over the relative autonomy of the state. I will revisit this exchange briefly in chapter five in the discussion of class/state/globality relation. However, it was largely as a response to these debates and positions that a number of social theorists began to argue explicitly for a more relational understanding of structures and agents. Perhaps the best known of these was Anthony Giddens' structurationist approach, but important contributions came also from the critical realism of Roy Baskhar (1989:89-115) and the morphogenetic perspective developed by Margaret Archer (1995, 2000).³⁷

These broadly dialectical approaches have more recently been taken up in IR/IPE as a response to the structuralism and intentionalism which had held sway in the neo-neo debates. Again, the positions on the outer reaches of these debates received more attention and ire than the more balanced accounts in the middle, but Bleiker notes that

at one end of the spectrum were neorealists who explain state identity and behaviour through a series of structural restraints which are said to emanate from the anarchical nature of the international system. At the other end we find neo-liberals who accept the existence of anarchy

³⁷ While Giddens is credited with the 'invention' of structuration, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) *Social Construction of Reality* initiated many of the key insights. (see Urry 1982). It is also worth noting that Archers morphogenetic approach is highly indebted to Bhaskar.

but seek to understand the behaviour of states and other international actors in terms of their individual attributes and their ability to engage in cooperative bargaining. If pushed to their logical end point the two positions amount respectively to a structural determinism and an equally far-fetched belief in the autonomy of rational actors. (2000: 10)

As IR/IPE began to open up to more sociological accounts during the 1990s the relational approach to these various dual positions became the main intellectual terrain on which these debates played out. I do not intend to revisit these debates here in any great detail, but review and draw on them in order to show how the strategic relational approach, drawing on some neo-Marxian/Gramscian and post-structuralist insights, presents some of the most plausible and persuasive analysis of this complex problem.

I proceed then, in a direction that attempts to depart from the deeply entrenched western practice of viewing the world in starkly dualistic terms. Such a predilection with binary terminology and categorisation represents a common and perhaps curious trait in western social science and theory. A relational account of the mutual constitution of these categories can go some way to dissolve these dualisms and open up new directions by which they might be approached. Herein, however, my concerns are more specific and look toward extending the parameters within which the structure-agency debate (and its supposed 'solution' in structuration theory and morphogenesis) has been examined. The aim is to suggest how critical discursive approaches warrant further consideration in these debates and can help develop the constructivist research programme in critical and progressive directions.

This departure is also evident in my attempt to extend an examination of the debate in a post-positivist and sometimes post-structuralist direction (following the work done by Doty, 1997, Suganami 1999 and Bleiker 2000). Doing so involves beginning to supplant the sometimes overly abstract concepts of structure/agency with the more concrete phenomena of discourses and

practices, relating these instead to a concept of agency that is neither completely determined by exogenous factors, nor entirely free-willed and autonomous. In short, following Hay (2002) and Jessop (2001), the purpose is to restore some of the potential for 'conscious, reflexive and strategic' agents which has been lost in much of the institutionalist accounts of politics. Roland Bleiker has suggested that:

A move toward a discursive and transversal understanding of social change makes room for various new ways of locating human agency in global politics. Agency is now no longer limited to the actions of statesmen or to great revolutionary events, but also takes place in countless daily and often mundane domains. (2000: 186)

I briefly highlight two possible directions in which the agent structure debate might be pursued in such a way as to avoid the difficulties and inconsistencies encountered by approaches that currently appear to dominate the literature. Both of these perspectives, neo-Gramscian and post-structuralist, appear to permit further research based upon a critical discourse methodology in which their relative merits might be combined for a more fruitful analysis of neoliberal institutions and ideology.

To reiterate, my intention here is by no means an attempt to resolve or explain these huge debates in any comprehensive manner, or to suggest that any particular approach is correct or incorrect. Indeed, as we shall see, the supposition that there can in fact be some resolution to this dilemma is a mistaken one. As Wight points out "If ever the agent-structure problem were solved, in the sense of requiring no further discussion, then social theoretic activity would come to an end, and along with it political, economic, cultural and ethical dispute" (2006: 63). Steven Fuller has even suggested that the failure to achieve any kind of acceptable resolution to the problem over more than 200 years of grappling with the issue across philosophy and the social disciplines suggests that we should simply admit defeat and proceed in other directions, he is "tempted to conclude that

sociologists are not smart enough to solve the problem or that the problem itself is spurious” (1998: 104). I disagree, and in what follows my intention is to open up more space for dialogue and analysis of the political, not to close off avenues for other perspectives.

In discussions of neoliberalism, the philosophy and ideology informing the political economy of late capitalism and dominant representations and explanations of globalisation, it is sometimes asserted that we are dealing with a set of structures that appear to determine, to a large extent, the actions of individuals and various collectivities. On the other hand, we are witnessing acts of political agency which enact, constitute and maintain those structures, in addition to those which are explicit in their opposition and resistance to neoliberalism and the trends it sets in motion. These oppositional forms of agency, or 'movements' as they are widely called, are similarly explicit in their desire for alternative structures and 'discursive formations' with which to replace them. It would seem impossible to consider and discuss these socio-historical processes of political conflict and contestation without some recourse to categories of structure and agency.

In a brief review and critique of ongoing debates on structure and agency, it will be suggested that many of these readings fail to sufficiently incorporate ideas, ideology and questions of culture into their analyses. I argue that the institutional transformations associated with globalisation can be understood as competing sets of discourse and respective patterns of strategic conduct, agency and practice. Analysis of these can help to reveal the uneven power relations of class, state and globality.

Structuration

Among many others, Alexander Wendt (1987) and Philip Cerny (2000) have, each in their own way, drawn upon Giddens theory of structuration in order to come to terms with the so-called 'Gordian

Knot' or 'aporia' of structure and agency in IR. Structuration was originally conceived though, as an attempt to resolve these debates within the human sciences more generally and in particular through the sociology of Anthony Giddens. While some attention is warranted then, Giddens complex theory of structuration is far too elaborate to provide a full exposition here. It is also important to recognise that, despite its alleged drawbacks, it moved the structure-agency debates within social theory forward in a number of important ways. It is well summed up in brief by Giddens himself in the following way:

The constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality. According to the notion of duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organise. (1986: 25)

When Giddens talks about the duality of structure (and less explicitly agency) he refers to structural properties as having both constraining and enabling effects on agents which are both the medium and the outcome of the contingently accomplished activities of situated actors. As we shall see however, such a definition fails to account sufficiently for the differentiation between various types of structural properties and so does not allow for a full appreciation of the fact that in certain historical periods, structures might be more enabling than they are constraining (and *vice versa*).

To some extent though, I concur (with Cerny, 2000) that the structure agency debate, still heavily dominated by Giddens theory of structuration, is a helpful conceptual lens through which to begin examining how agents constitute structures having been themselves considerably constituted by prior structural and cultural conditions. Structurationism marked a welcome step forward from theories that privileged one element of analysis at the expense of discounting the other. In his approach Giddens also recognises and makes explicit the importance of ideological and discursive elements of the structure agency relationship, arguing that “the reification of social relations, or

the discursive naturalisation of the historically contingent circumstances and products of human action is one of the main dimensions of ideology in social life” (Giddens 1984: 25-26). The discursive slant to structures is discernible in Giddens earlier work where, developing his theory, he presents an account of structure which is distinct from ‘system’ in that it consists primarily of ‘rules (and resources)’. According to Giddens, it can be partly understood in terms of Saussurean structural linguistics (1976: 118-122) where rules play a similar role to *langue* in relation to agency, which can be conceived of as being akin to *parole* as an enactment of these rules in space and time (see also Sewell 1992: 6-7).

Central to Giddens theory is his concept of the ‘duality of structure’ as both “the medium and the outcome of the conduct it recursively organises; the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction” (1984: 374). Giddens uses the analogy of a coin to illustrate his conception whereby structure and agency are two sides of the same coin. Hay (2001, 2002) challenges Giddens approach by suggesting that this analogy reveals a weakness in structurationism in that it is only possible to view one aspect of the duality at any one time. As a result the ‘duality of structure’ may in fact replicate the analytical dualism which Giddens is trying to overcome. This apparent paradox is illustrated in the ‘methodological bracketing’ adopted by Giddens (1984: 281-293). According to this, capturing the agential/strategic and structural/institutional simultaneously is not feasible in any given instance. As a result when we engage in social or political analysis in any given situation we must decide for that case which side of the ‘coin’ should be bracketed off. According to Hay, “the unfortunate consequence is a simple alternation between structuralist and intentionalist accounts which belie the sophistication of the structuralist ontology” (2002:120).

Despite the considerable advances made by this approach then, it is not entirely without its problems. These problems emerge not only with the application of structuration theory to the

disciplinary and often state-centric rigidities of IR (which is perhaps more of a problem with the dominant state-centric assumptions latent to that discipline) but also reside within the application of structuration as a supposed solution to the structure-agency problem within social theory generally. Nevertheless, it is almost impossible to conceive of discussing contemporary problems and processes of class, state and globality without some reference to structures and structuration.

Indeed, it has been noted that “theories of globalisation have tended to privilege structural explanations of change” (Cerny, 2000: 436). That is to say, aspects generally assumed to represent processes of globalisation such as post-Fordist production techniques, global financial architecture, and proliferating and expanding networks of information and communications technology are seen as driving forward or 'determining' novel types of human consciousness and behaviour, including new forms of resistance. Unsurprisingly, this inherent structuralism and materialism also appears to be the case for a good deal of IR literature more generally (Doty 1997: 372). Indeed, as we have seen, notwithstanding the welcome incursions from a variety of constructivist analyses, traditional realist and Marxian assumptions continue to adhere to a focus upon structural and material conditions, often at the expense of sufficient consideration of ideational and agential factors.

My intention here, following a very brief foray into Giddens' reception and application within the discipline of IR, is to highlight some of these shortcomings and to suggest a way in which structuration theory might be enhanced through a greater appreciation of ideology, narratives and the application of critical historical and discursive analyses of the debates that surround processes of globalisation and their attendant sites of resistive democratic agency. Some of the criticisms stem from a post-structuralist position, although a number of caveats will be made in order to preserve a significant normative potential for the role of agency in world politics. Many of these criticisms are shared by those of a neo-Gramscian persuasion, although they have extended the debate in a slightly different (though no less valid) direction (Bieler and Morton 2001).

Alexander Wendt (1987) has clearly found Giddens' theory attractive and has attempted, somewhat problematically, to apply it to his own project of defending scientific realism and the state-centric approach to International Relations theory while moving cautiously in a constructivist direction.³⁸ Such an endeavour entails a recognition that, firstly "human beings are purposeful actors whose actions help to reproduce or transform the society in which they live; and secondly, that society is made up of social relationships, which structure the interaction between these purposeful actors" (Wendt 1987: 337-338).

The main purpose of Wendt's position appears to be a recognition of how unobservable phenomena such as structures, can have causal impacts and can therefore be treated as ontologically relevant or 'real' and therefore causally significant within scientific realism. Wendt, and some other *conventional* or *modern* constructivists, seek to achieve their objective primarily through a process of 'bracketing' similar to that laid out by Giddens (Wendt 1987: 364-365). The method involves his taking "social structures and agents in turn as temporarily given in order to examine the explanatory effects of the other" (364-365). This element of structuration theory, it will be argued below, displays a number of drawbacks in relation to any attempt to 'resolve' the agent structure debate.

While appreciating at least some of the movements in mainstream IR theory that have followed from Wendt's interventions, I argue that his over-reliance on structuration provides too narrow an account of global politics than is required to effectively scrutinise processes of globalisation and institutional transformation, not to mention the increasingly transversal forms of resistance and dissent. While by no means exhausting the range of alternative perspectives to these debates, and not without its own shortcomings, post-structuralism offers cogent criticisms and an opportunity

³⁸ For a wide ranging discussion of Wendt's social theory see the Forum on *Social Theory of International Politics* and especially for a critique, in that forum Steve Smith (2000) 'Wendt's World' *Review of International Studies* 26 (1): 151-163.

to extend the debate through a more critical focus upon discourse-practice relationship. I introduce these perspectives here largely in terms of their criticism of existing positions in the structure and agency debate and how, partly in combination with historicist neo-Gramscian strains of historical materialism, they have helped to inform the strategic-relational approach developed by Jessop and Hay.

Post-structural positions and discursive directions

Post-structuralists represent an interesting contribution to the debate over structures and agents due to their scepticism toward the ontological basis on which many of the mainstream arguments rest. From this perspective “there is no point in trying to establish the ‘real’ relationship between structure and agency. Any understanding of the issue is viewed as one constructed in the language and discourse we use” (McAnulla 2002:282). As a result, some post-structuralists have dismissed the problem as ultimately undecideable (Ashley 1989) which has in turn led others to conclude the issues lie beyond the scope of post-structuralist concerns (Carlsnaes 1992: 244). In a critical response to this assertion and a critique of the apparent 'gaps, silences and foreclosures' evident within the established treatment of the agency-structure problem, Doty (1997) subjects these various accounts to a post-structuralist reading. Her reasons for doing so are that “the solutions that have been proposed to this problem appear to either end up reverting to a structural determinism, or alternatively, to an understanding of agents which presumes pre-given autonomous individuals” (ibid.: 366). Both of which seem to leave us very little further on than where we started in the first place with a choice between structuralism and intentionalism. In

response to these drawbacks, some interesting questions are raised by a post-structuralist perspective as to the role of discourse within a process of social change.³⁹

According to Doty, the conflation of agents and structures, as is the case with Wendt, following Giddens, results, in an inability to carry out satisfactory empirical research (1997: 369). In response, Carlsnaes (1992), following Archer (1990, 1995), attempts to overcome this conflation by adopting a morphogenetic account which introduces a temporal element into the interaction between structures and agency. This approach emphasises the sequential process of structuring over time, suggesting that actions or agency are both pre-dated and post-dated by structures (Carlsnaes 1992: 259). Margaret Archer summarises her account of morphogenesis in the following way:

Action is ceaseless and essential both to the continuation and further elaboration of the system, but subsequent interaction will be different from earlier action because conditioned by the structural consequences of that prior action. Hence the morphogenetic perspective is not only dualistic but sequential, dealing in endless cycles of structural conditioning/social interaction/structural elaboration, thus unravelling the dialectical interplay between structure and action. (Archer 1990: 76)

However, for Doty this does not appear to resolve the agent-structure problem in any meaningful or satisfactory way. As noted by Hollis and Smith (1994: 250), it simply introduces another variable, that of time, into the debate. While (as noted by neo-Gramscian perspectives) the temporal element is something that should necessarily be considered in a study of historical social change,

³⁹ Hidemi Suganami (1999), while hardly a post-structuralist, has however indicated that his approach to the debate has itself been influenced by the notion suggested that questions of social change are inherent (perhaps even central) within debates on structure and agency. He poses the question: "How does one type of social structure (with its distinctive agent-structure relationship) move to another type (with a different sort of agent-structure relationship)?" (366) Although stating that no substantive answer can be given in the abstract he states that "What is clear is that its answer will take a narrative form... without narratives, we signify nothing." (381)

Doty argues that at any one time, one must still focus upon either the action of agents, the structures that permitted those actions or on the structures resulting from such actions (1997: 374).

In a similar vein, Wendt's suggestion that whilst undertaking historical analysis, structure should be bracketed, and during structural analysis, history should be bracketed (1987:364-5) again draws significantly upon the work of Giddens and his analytic strategy of bracketing. Such a strategy is open to similar criticisms as that of morphogenesis. Both approaches must at any one time give ontological primacy, and hence explanatory priority, to either agents or structures, thereby effectively repeating at least some of the problems which they criticise in accounts that favour either structures or agency exclusively in explanatory accounts of social change.

Critiquing the work of Carlsnaes (1992), Dessler (1989) and Bhaskar (1975), Doty attempts to show that the separation between agents and structures is insufficiently maintained, illustrating an "incompatibility between structuration theory and its philosophical base (as presented by Wendt at least), scientific realism" (1997: 369). Wendt's scientific realism owes more than a little to the critical realism of Bhaskar. Bhaskar argues that the generative mechanisms that create structures, at least according to scientific realism, are 'intransitive objects of scientific enquiry' and 'are quite independent of men – as thinkers, causal agents and perceivers" (1975, cited in Doty 1997:370). Therefore, for this project at least, which argues that ideational factors are at least partly constitutive of structures, such an epistemological foundation is less than appropriate as there remains limited scope for the role of agency within structuration theory or indeed morphogenesis.

Furthermore, in seeking to "transcend the subject-object dualism" (Giddens 1986:120), Giddens and Wendt appear to perpetuate it. Doty suggests that "by underpinning structuration theory with a scientific realist philosophy of science, Wendt ultimately falls back into a positivist mode of analysis which posits a radical separation between subject and object" (1997:370). However, some

preliminary criticisms can be made here before proceeding with an analysis of her post-structural reading of agency and structure.

As already suggested, post-structuralism has been accused of having nothing to offer in the structure agency debates as its general position is that the problem is undecidable, that it represents an 'aporia'. Doty maintains, however, that the undecidability inheres instead within the limited conceptual lenses that have been used to explore the problem. The 'metaphysical commitment' on the part of the scholars mentioned above, to *conclude* the issue in a decisive manner (and in the process, according to Doty, further displaying its undecidability) forecloses some important possibilities which she seeks to pursue. "Subjecting the agent-structure problematique to a poststructural gaze enables us to push further the undecidability issue already raised by the literature itself. Despite the failures of the proposed solutions [...] there are important openings that can be further pursued" (Doty 1997: 375). I suggest these openings lead us interestingly, but not unproblematically, into the territory of discourse and the ideational contexts of meaning within which agency and/or practice manifest themselves.

Doty does not claim to be able to resolve the paradoxes of the debate highlighted above, but aims to press them further through an examination of the concept of practice(s). She links practice closely with the concept of agency in a way not altogether different from other agency-structure theorists. She does however move a little further in giving analytic priority to the concept of practice as it represents "the very thing which drives the agency structure debate" (1997: 376). Furthermore, Doty opts for a more radical and decentred conception of practice, informed by post-structuralists such as Derrida, where it is understood to be inextricably connected to the production of meaning(s). Stuart Hall supports such a perspective, suggesting that "since all social practices entail meaning and meanings shape and influence what we do—our conduct—all practices have a discursive aspect" (1992:291).

According to Doty, this connection has been insufficiently examined, even by authors who do explicitly refer to practice, albeit in a rather restricted and conservative fashion (Dessler 1989: 454; Wendt 1992: 401). In contrast, Doty's call for a decentring of practice requires "an appreciation of the intrinsically ambiguous and open-ended nature of practice" (1997: 376). Hence she rejects attempts to pinpoint some determinable centre in which to locate a concrete source and meaning of practices such as generative structural principles or an unproblematically given subject. Such a process of decentring practices requires "a questioning of how meanings are constructed and imposed, and this necessarily involves the issue of power" (1997: 376; see also Ashley 1989).

Generally speaking then, practices are embedded within discourse(s) and as such, particular meanings become attributed or signified. However, practices are not automatically produced by discourse; there is no causal relationship of an instrumental or mechanical nature. Nor, according to Doty, is there such a link between practice and the reproduction of a particular discourse. Instead there exists a significant dimension of indeterminacy within these processes of signification. Hence Doty states that "practices cannot be essentialised" (1997: 377) in the same way that structure and agency appear to have been within the debates. Furthermore, "practices, because of their inextricable link with meaning, have an autonomy which cannot be reduced to either the intentions, will, motivations or interpretations of choice-making subjects or to the constraining and enabling mechanisms of objective but socially constructed structures"(ibid.).

Post-structuralists such as Derrida (on whom Doty draws heavily) have drawn on the *arbitrariness* of the linguistic sign, an aspect of Saussure's work that appears to have been overlooked by structurationists, despite the residual linguistic tenor of Giddens' approach. Although some IR structurationists such as Wendt (1987:355) have drawn implicitly on the generative properties of linguistic structures developed by Saussure, this has been in a quite limited way. For Doty, following Saussure, the value or meaning of a sign is determined "by its differential relationship to

other signs [...] Signs always refer to other signs" (Doty: 378). This leads post-structuralists to question how meaning (and thus what primarily constitutes an ideational structure) is determined, considering the potentially infinite number of practices, how is such a play of differences "limited and made systematically intelligible" (1997:378). Derrida attempts to address this question by suggesting that all structures contain an organising centre:

The function of this centre [is] not only to orient, balance, and organise the structure--one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganised structure--but above all to make sure that the organising principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure.
(Derrida 1978:278)

This centre is brought about and maintained by way of disciplining practices that effectively marginalise any attempt to realise alternative structures with different patterns of enablement and limitation.

Questions of the structuring of structure are highly complex in determinate and constraints of space prevent an adequate exposition here of how this relates to ideological power and discursive practice. Later chapters will take up parts of this argument in some more detail. To summarise though, it is not difficult to recognise how relations of power bear heavily upon the process of 'structuring structure' and the supposed necessity for powerful groups and interests of maintaining a centre. Recognising the element of force or violence entailed in such a process, Doty notes that "[b]ecause any system or structure of meaning exists at the expense of alternative possibilities, its construction involves practices that silence or marginalise those alternatives" (1997:378). These points appear somewhat reminiscent of Gramsci's 'war of position' in the formation of historic blocs and the pursuit of hegemonic change. It might appear that Doty's work is not so far removed from or beyond neo-Marxist understandings of ideology, but simply more alert to the potential structuralism in Marxian modes of analysis.

While Doty appears to offer a number of valid criticisms of established approaches to the agent-structure problem, her post-structural ventures appear to require some further clarification. With such a heavy focus upon the role of practices within the relationship between structure and agency, it is somewhat puzzling that she does not provide a more concrete explanation of them or indeed how they come about. For Doty, it appears sufficient to present them as indeterminate and decentred. Indeed, Margaret Archer (2000) engages more fully with the concept of practice and connects it to language by emphasising that practices are those things about which language formed (155-159). Consciousness is always to be conscious of something. Even if its referent is to an internal bodily state, this has an ontological status independent of the ideas we hold about it" (Archer 2000: 154). Such a realist position, albeit a critical one, would seem to limit the possibility of our having ideas about alternative circumstances or practices not yet apparent or realised.

One of the central claims of critical constructivism is the need to avoid closing off avenues for the further analysis of social phenomena and alternative conditions or contexts. The necessarily temporal and spatial 'unboundedness' of such things as society, economy and culture make them resistant to such closure and analysis of them should recognise and emphasize this. Notwithstanding these important caveats, the categories of structure and agency demand attention in an exploration of the processes and effects of neoliberal globalisation and the myriad forms of resistance that have arisen to challenge it. While some postmodern approaches reject the reality of these categories altogether, Doty's cautious and 'bounded' relativism represents an interesting and in sometimes informative intervention.

However, Doty's post-structural interventions are not without their own difficulties as identified by Colin Wight. Wight suggests that many of the flaws in Doty's position flow from her misreading of previous writers on the subject of structure and agency. This is quite possible but difficult to ascertain, as the nature of the debate means that the interpretation of the interpreters themselves

could lead into an endless spiral in the search for a 'true' reading of any particular analysis. Nevertheless, Wight makes two points of criticism which are more persuasive. First he suggests that Doty's attempt to locate agency in the 'indeterminacy of practices' means that "indeterminacy is always made determinate" (1999: 135). For Wight, this results in an overdeterminate account of agency which is both reductive and "verging on the mechanistic" (135). Secondly, rather than addressing the agent structure problem, Doty avoids it by simply replacing those categories with that of the play of practice(s). Unobservable elements such as structures and agents are not really considered in Doty's account. Wight suggests that such a theoretical celebration of only that which can be observed—practices, results in a form of "radical behaviouralism, albeit in a linguistic form" (Wight 1999:135).

Fairclough, who also refers to social practices in this context is helpful here as he provides some definition of social practices which is lacking in Doty's account.

coherent accounts of the relationship between social structures and social events depend upon mediating categories, for which I shall use the term 'social practices', meaning more or less stable and durable forms of social activity, which are articulated together to constitute social fields, institutions, and organizations. There is a semiotic dimension at each of these levels. Languages (as well as other semiotic systems) are a particular type of social structure. (Fairclough n.d.:2)

Texts and discourses are also, quite obviously, the key medium for expression of ideas and ideology so in order to ascertain the meaning of social practices, we must interrogate and interpret the discourses associated with them.

Doty's work is helpful in identifying and pursuing the concept of practice but it fails to specify sufficiently what practices actually are and how or in what ways they are distinct from agency. A critical analysis which seeks to identify the agency or practice of powerful groups in order to contest it requires an account more grounded in the concrete social relations of contemporary neoliberal

capitalism. In addition, her account does not engage with the role of ideas and ideology and their relation to structures and practices of power, despite her insistence of the importance of power. Critical constructivism finds aspects of post-structuralism persuasive but attempts to deploy them in a more politically oriented and emancipatory direction. Practices may indeed warrant some 'decentring' but they also need to be understood in relation to the ideas and ideologies which motivate and shape them. Perhaps a more effective focus would be to consider not simply practice but the more ideationally infused concept of *praxis* as developed in the Gramscian tradition.

Marx, Gramsci and Cox

It is rare to encounter any account of structure and agency, Marxist or otherwise, without some reference to Marx's famous statement about men making history and vice versa. In fact our current thinking rarely takes us far beyond this truism. Marx was obviously aware of the important relationship between political agency and the structuring effect that history had upon the possibilities for that agency. Furthermore, it seems clear that he was keen to carefully qualify the structuralism and determinism of which he is consistently accused by his detractors. What might also be suggested in the light of his statement on the matter is that the basic premise from which Giddens draws his theory of structuration is almost as old as social theory itself. Despite this, it is fair to say that classical Marxist social theory has been in decline across the social sciences for some time. In IR/IPE, the valuable neo-Marxist 'World Systems' analysis of Wallerstein and dependency theory of Frank (among others) have come under criticism for their structural bias. Indeed, Marxist inspired analyses in general appear to have been replaced by the social constructivism as the main rival to Realism and Liberalism in IR. This is despite the fact that, as pointed out by Teschke and Heine:

Constructivism has failed to produce a systematic critique of historical materialism in general and of Marx-inspired IR literature in particular. Rather, it has tended to trivialise or caricature Marxist theorems in fleeting remarks, while simultaneously incorporating many of their best insights into its core theoretical repertory. (2002: 167)

In response to this, I reiterate the point that constructivism is such a broad church that it is necessary to specify and qualify the denomination under scrutiny. Teschke and Heine explicitly aim their criticism at Wendt and Ruggie (whom they consider as exemplars of constructivism) and thus fail to sufficiently consider the potential arguments and merits of a critical constructivism, whose insights derive more from the 'post-Marxism' of Gramsci, Foucault and Habermas and as a result attend more to practices and processes of conflict, repression, exploitation and relations of domination/resistance inherent in state and global capitalist relations of production. This strain of constructivism represents a more suitable candidate for the inheritance and further developments of Marxian insights.

Critical constructivism adds a belief that constructions of reality reflect, enact, and reify relations of power. [...] powerful groups play a privileged role in the process of social construction. The task [...] is both to unmask these ideational structures of domination and to facilitate the imagining of alternative worlds. Critical constructivists thus see a weaker autonomous role for ideas than do other constructivists because ideas are viewed as more tightly linked to relations of material power. (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001: 398)

Indeed, there is much to be said for the compatibility between critical constructivism and the more sophisticated accounts of Marxism that transcend the structuralism which has hindered some accounts of Marx's varied and voluminous works. While the careful consideration and clarification of Marx's ideas is necessary, I suggest his critical intellectual legacy remains invaluable to any discussion of resistive agency and dissent within capitalist social and ideational structures and relations. An especially rich development (and substantial re-working) of his ideas was pursued by

Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci further developed a Marxist perspective to focus in particular on an enlarged conception of ideology or more specifically 'hegemony'. I will examine this aspect of Marx and Gramsci's work further in the following chapter, but the broader rejection of economism in recent Marxian scholarship permits an application of some of Gramsci's ideas in particular which can shed light on the structure/agency problematic.

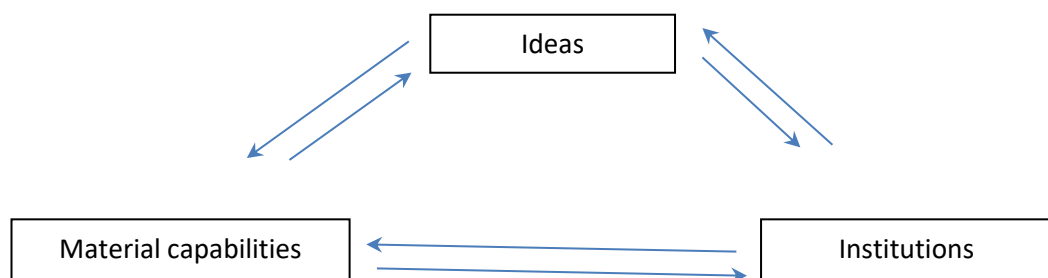
The bulk of Gramsci's work must be understood in relation to the particular era in which he was writing and as such can now appear rather state-centric in an era of global capitalist relations. However, in terms of distinguishing historical materialism from historical economism, his contribution to the revalidation of Marxian perspectives has been enormous. In particular his conception of hegemony, discussed in more detail in the following chapter, provides an enhanced role for cultural and ideational factors in understanding the structure-agency relationship.

In International Relations, Gramsci's ideas were first and most fruitfully developed and applied by Robert Cox. Cox has extrapolated Gramsci's notion of hegemony (distinct from that found in realist IR literature) which he considers to be particularly valuable, and applied it to his analysis of the global system. The concept of hegemony and its construction through a war of position and the formation of an historic bloc is both relevant and useful to the task of better understanding the relationship between structure and agency. According to Cox, "the historic bloc is the term applied to the particular configuration of social classes and ideology that gives content to an historical state" (1987: 409). Applied to contemporary concerns such a historical state must be considered as existing beyond the boundaries of the modern nation-state.

In Cox's social ontology of historical structures, drawn from the work of Gramsci and further elaborated by Bieler and Morton (2001), primacy is accorded to the social relations of production. This does not entail any kind of stark economism though, as Cox points out:

Production... is to be understood in the broadest sense. It is not confined to the production of physical goods used or consumed. It covers also the production and reproduction of knowledge and of the social relations, morals and institutions that are prerequisites to the production of physical goods. (1989: 39)

The social relations of production, viewed in this broad sense permit a reading of the processes of globalisation and the ideological structures of neoliberalism as open and fluid rather than static, actively created by the ideas and practice, or praxis, of humans themselves and not merely the cold, immutable and inevitable structures of history. This allows us to conceive of them as politically contestable and amenable to transformation. Furthermore, the importance of the production and reproduction of knowledge via contested narratives permits (and perhaps even requires) the application of a critical discourse analysis into a historical materialist research agenda. In addition, the centrality of ideas to Cox's work illustrates the compatibility of Gramscian insights and categories with a critical constructivist approach. These ideas, Cox argues, interact in a three-way relationship with institutions and material capabilities.



(Figure 1. From Cox 1996: 98)

Cox broadly identifies two kinds of ideas, intersubjective meanings and collective images. The former are a more widely and deeply established category such as sovereignty or capital. "These notions, although durable over long periods of time are historically conditioned. The realities of world politics have not always been represented in precisely this way and may not be in the future" (1996: 98). These ideational structures are contingent and Cox stresses the possibility of tracing their origins and detecting signs of their weakening. The second category of ideas, collective images of social order, may differ across various social groups such as nations or classes, "these are differing views as to both the nature and the legitimacy of prevailing power relations" (1996: 99). While intersubjective meanings represent the widely held 'common sense' and broadly shared understandings of world politics—a dominant ideology, collective images may be several and exist in opposition. For Cox, "the clash of rival collective images provides evidence for the potential for alternative paths of development and raises questions as to the possible material and institutional basis for the emergence of an alternative structure" (1996: 99). Both structure and agency then, contain important ideational elements which depending on the relative balance of forces, enable or constrain opportunities for stasis or transformation.

Cox argues that there is a close connection between Gramsci's notion of hegemony and processes of institutionalisation. Institutions, he argues, represent means of addressing conflicts in order to minimise the need to use force.

There is an enforcement potential in the in the material power relations underlying any structure, in that the strong can destroy the weak if necessary. But force will not have to be used in order to ensure the dominance of the strong to the extent that the weak accept the prevailing power relations as legitimate. This the weak may do if the strong see their mission as hegemonic and not merely dominant or dictatorial, that is if they are willing to make concessions that will secure the weak's acquiescence in their leadership and if they can express this leadership in terms of universal or general interests, rather than just serving their own particular interests. (1996: 99)

Such a hegemonic strategy is most effective when anchored in institutional frameworks, material and ideational as they serve the twin purpose of universalising policy of intersubjective meanings and representing the diverse interests of collective images.

In some ways it could be said that the historicist method of defining structure differs only slightly from that of structurationist accounts. It seems, however, to provide a more nuanced and open approach that is particularly receptive to historically contingent processes of social change and as such offers an enhanced potential for the role of agency in world politics and a greater consideration of its role in IR theory. Indeed, historicist epistemology is receptive to the notion that even 'deep' structures such as those of feudalism and capitalism, what Giddens conceived as system rather than structure, are receptive to change, although they acknowledge that these are by their very nature, more enduring and entrenched than 'meso' structures such as Fordism or post-Fordism which might be seen as different orders of discourse within the episteme of capitalism. Bieler and Morton (2001) differentiate between macro, meso and micro structures in their Coxian analysis of agency-structure, suggesting that the deeper the structure, the more difficult it is to conceive of transforming it.

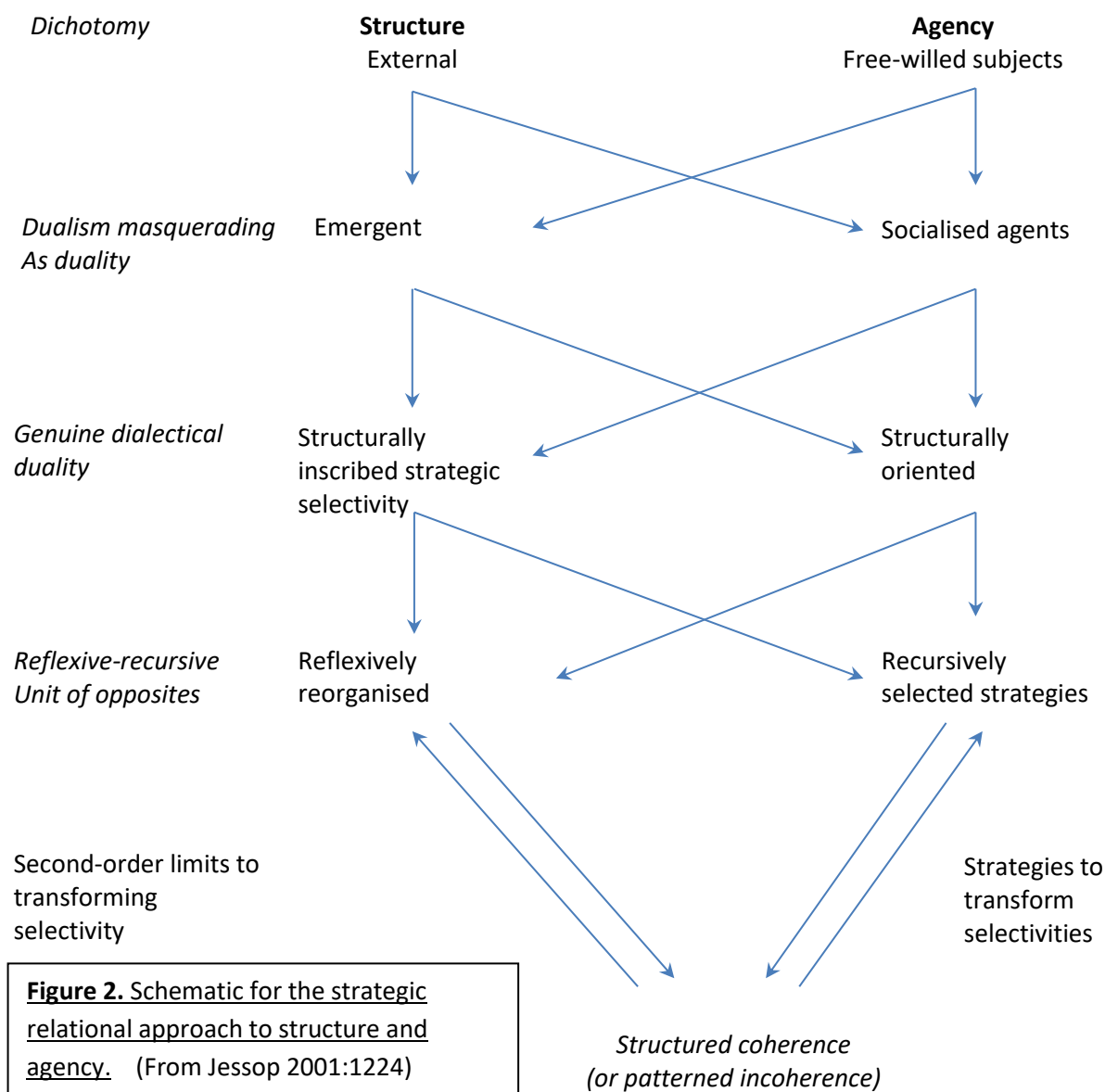
While acknowledging that human agency is indeed structured on a number of levels, Bieler and Morton reject the notion of determinism. Along with Colin Wight (1999), they argue that '[b]eing embedded in historical structures, however, does not imply that agency is necessarily determined. Rather, structures shape, constrain and even enable social forces who always have several different possible courses of action at their disposal' (2001: 25). I argue that this represents a significant addition to, if not necessarily an advance upon the structurationist and some of the overly structural constructivist accounts of structure and agency relationships. It also serves as a useful corrective to some of the problems with post-structural approaches in that the agents of domination and resistance such as classes and social movements are more easily identified.

A Strategic Relational Approach

Hay and Jessop have combined and developed insights from both Marxism and critical realism in what they term a strategic relational approach. This represents an ambitious yet persuasive move forward from what they consider to be the limitations of structuration and its variants. The approach rests on an important ontological distinction whereby structure and agency can only be considered as independent phenomena in an analytical sense. Unlike Archer who considers them to exist in separate temporal domains where agency is conditioned by pre-existing structures, a purely analytical distinction allows for the simultaneous presence of agency and structure in any particular situation. The necessarily relational nature of these categories means that neither can have any real existence in isolation from the other. Drawing on Giddens' coin analogy, Hay suggests that rather than representing two sides of the same coin, where only one side may be considered at any one time, structure and agency are more like "the two metals in the alloy from which the coin is moulded [...] we cannot see either metal in the alloy by looking at the coin, but we can see the product of their fusion" (Hay 1999: 200). As such, any attempt to separate them is a purely abstract and theoretical move and should not be taken to reify their ontological or practical existence as distinct phenomenon. Social processes and institutions are not then simply the sum of structure and agency but a result of their complex interaction. Our attention therefore should not be directed at the theoretical abstractions of structure and agency but their dialectical relationship in concrete contexts of political action. Some of the difficulty with the approaches outlined above then is due to the terms of the debate themselves which imply an ontological distinction where actually only an analytical one is possible.

In response, Jessop tries to develop a new conceptual language through which to understand the relational and dialectical nature of agency and structure in ongoing temporally and spatially situated social and institutional processes. Beginning with the problematic conceptual dualism of

structure and agency (see the first row in figure 2), Jessop develops a situated process based account whereby agency is brought into structure and vice versa. The second row represents Giddens structuralist account. Jessop then moves the process onwards bring the socialised agents back into a context of strategic selectivity and here the strategic- relational aspects of specific conjunctures are illustrated in the third row. Strategically calculating actors in a dialectical relation to a strategically selective structure. This provides a more effective picture of the ways in which agents appropriate their particular situated context and how that environment circumscribes the parameters of their selection of available actions.



The elements of Giddens approach which Jessop considers to be admissible (top two rows) are preserved in the lower levels. As a result:

the concepts that appear under the agency column in the third row draw attention to the possibility of reflection on the part of individual and collective actors about the strategic selectivities inscribed within structures so that they come to orient their strategies and tactics in the light of their understanding of the current conjuncture and their 'feel for the game'.

(ibid.:1225)

This allows for an extension whereby agents can reflect, recursively reformulating their identities within the new strategically selective context. The major advance of this 'radical methodological relationalism', which may seem obvious but is overlooked or obscured in the process of bracketing or morphogenesis, is that the context or environment is itself 'strategically selective'. That is, certain strategies are favoured over others as ways of achieving particular preferences. In a similar fashion, the structural column illustrates the way in which particular structural configurations tend to "reinforce selectively specific forms of action, tactics, or strategies and to discourage others" (Jessop 2001: 1224). For instance, in a widely perceived context of unrestricted global investment capital movement, governments are less likely to opt for policies which place an increased burden on the potential investor such as high corporate taxes, support for workers' rights, strong environmental regulation etcetera. The context (either real or perceived) of capital mobility strategically selects the available policy options for governments.

These concepts, when combined, suggest the possibility for structural alteration is largely dependent upon

structurally inscribed strategic selectivity (and thus has path-dependent as well as path-shaping aspects); and that the recursive selection of strategies and tactics depends on individual,

collective, or organizational learning capacities and on the 'experiences' resulting from the pursuit of different strategies and tactics in different conjunctures. (ibid.: 1224)

The fourth row of the schematic indicates then that transformation of the structural configuration is thus constrained by the way agents anticipate the "immanent necessity of their social world with the result that they reproduce their subjection to conditions similar to those in which they are placed" (ibid.: 1224; see also Bourdieu 1988: 783). Jessop notes that this level is also reminiscent of Storper's "circular relation between conventions and institutions" (1998: 269).

As this relationship coevolves through history these relatively undisturbed configurations can display a relatively stable order or 'structured coherence. We can see evidence for this in the post-war Keynesian consensus or the contemporary order of discourse illustrated by neoliberal consensus since the 1980's. Both the historical record and Jessop's strategic-relational approach demonstrate that despite periods of stability and coherence, periodical crisis can result in the establishment of new orders of discourse.

While I agree that the strategic relational approach represents the most persuasive way in which to understand the relationship between the strategies of political agents and their institutional settings and contexts, the narrower issue of how and why those strategic actors come to choose one course of action over another remains. While much of the discussion in this and previous chapters points toward the assumption that we cannot make general predictions about how actors will behave in any situation, the remaining task is to attempt a better interpretation and understanding of how and why actors make certain decisions in specific times and places. I suggest that a critical and discursive constructivism builds on the strategic relational approach and points towards some methodological opportunities whereby discourse analysis can reveal more about the strategic selectivity of contexts and the interests which situated actors perceive to be their own. In the strategic-relational approach, agents are considered to be conscious, reflexive and strategic.

They demonstrate intentionality in that they can be seen to act purposefully through combined attempts to realise their preferences and intentions. However, as noted by Hay “they may also act intuitively and/or out of habit” (2002: 131). I suggest that such intuitions or habits are discernible through a closer examination of prevailing ideational frames and ideologies and that critical and constructivist inflected discursive analyses can be developed to reveal more about these.

Indeed, Hay (2002) emphasises the similarities between structure and agency and the ideational and the material. An acceptance of the strategic relational view of structure and agency, a similarly dialectical view of the relationship between the ideational and the material almost inevitably follows” (2002: 209).

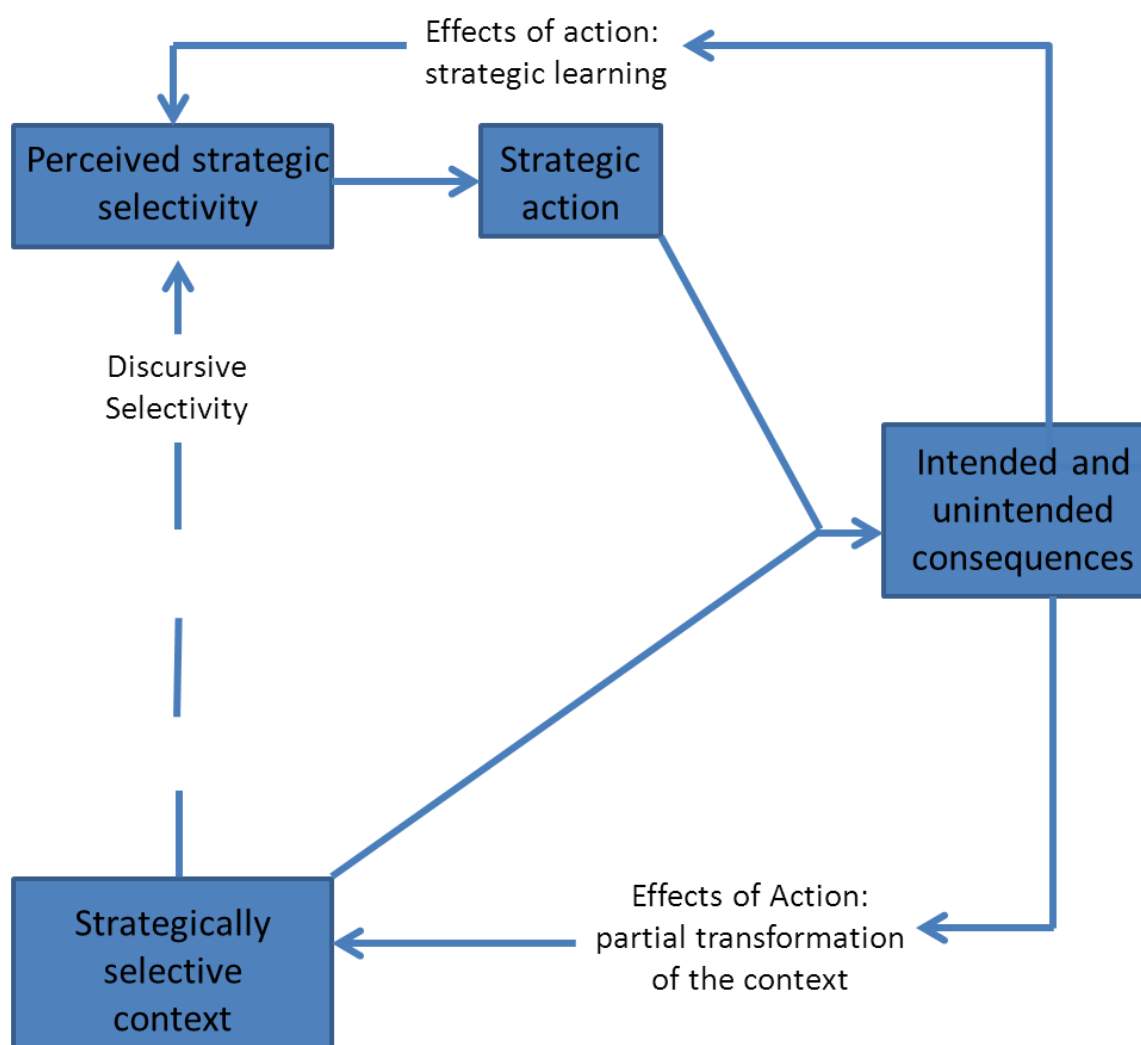


Figure 3. Strategic relational approach to ideational and material factors. (From Hay 2002: 209)

As with the SRA for structure and agency, the strategically selective context comes to imply the benefit or preference of certain strategies over alternative ones. Moreover, agents' knowledge of the selectivity of the context they inhabit is both necessarily limited and unreliable. As a result they have only past experiences from which to gauge the likely outcomes of particular choices but in the same process their previous actions and those of others may have altered the strategically selective context.

Constructivism

While constructivism might be regarded as having its oldest roots in the soil of philosophical idealism of thinkers such as Kant, Hume, Hegel and Berkeley who all argued, albeit in quite different ways, that beliefs, experience and historical context were central to the constitution of knowledge, constructivism *per se* is more accurately seen as a product of sociological perspectives developed during the last century in response to the problem of ideology inherited from Marxism. The older school of philosophical idealism maintained an individualist epistemology which was not well equipped to consider the social dimension of the construction of knowledge with which we are concerned here. Max Weber's denial of the existence of a social objectivity outside the discourse of science is an important reference point (Hoenisch 2006).

More significant though for constructivism specifically, is the contribution of Karl Mannheim and his development of the 'sociology of knowledge' (Delanty, 1997). Mannheim was interested in rescuing the concept of ideology from its negative connotations which it had absorbed in the

writings of Marx and Engels. He was by no means the first to make such an attempt and others involved in this project are discussed in more detail below.⁴⁰ It is important to note here however that constructivism has a deep connection with Marxist and neo-Marxist social theory. In particular, Mannheim was himself profoundly influenced by the work of Lukacs with whom he had studied at the University of Budapest. Like Lukacs he challenged the ahistorical positivist outlook which he regarded as unsatisfactory and emphasised that all knowledge is situated within history and represents in itself a key element of the socio-historical process which it seeks, in turn, to comprehend. Mannheim's constructivist insights reject much of the individualism characteristic of philosophical idealism and more importantly, he was above all responsible for the key qualification of the relativism which may develop from historicist positions. Mannheim contended that in fact

what is intelligible in history can be formulated only with reference to problems and conceptual constructions which themselves arise in the flux of historical experience. Once we recognise that all knowledge is relational knowledge, and can only be formulated with reference to the position of the observer, we are faced once more with the task of discriminating what is true and what is false in such knowledge [...] We must constantly ask ourselves how it comes about that a given type of social situation, gives rise to a given interpretation. Thus, the ideological element in human thought, viewed at this level, is always bound up with the existing life situation of the thinker. (1936: 71)

Like Marx then, Mannheim also maintained that a society's cultural and belief system was heavily structured by the thoughts of a dominant group and he contrasted this *Ideology* with the *Utopia* which reflected the aspiration of those struggling to bring about progressive social change (Delanty

⁴⁰ The combination of a constructivist focus on ideas and Marxist considerations of ideology might at first appear incommensurable. Marx and Engels most notable contribution was to turn the idealist philosophy of the young Hegelians on its head and treat ideas as epiphenomenal or 'superstructural' to the materiality of economic interests. While in the works of Marx and Engels such a materialism appears undeniably dominant, it is not always consistent and there are elements to the earlier manuscripts where a much more significant role is afforded to the role of ideas. A much fuller discussion of these debates forms much of chapter 4.

1997: 114; Gupta, 2002: 185-196; Thompson 1990: 47-52). Mannheim's historicism and the Marxist concept of ideology from which it draws heavily is discussed in more detail and historical context in the following chapter. Before proceeding I will briefly outline the more critical elements of constructivist thought and give an example of how it illustrates contemporary ideal/material relational issues in world politics, the ways in which ideas constitute institutions and *vice versa*.

A second antecedent to constructivism, one which situates it more firmly in the critical domain, is the work of Frankfurt scholars such as Horkheimer, Marcuse and Adorno. More recently, the work of Habermas, also associated with this school, has blended its critical elements with more concretely political developments calling for a dialogic or *discursive* democracy. Checkel (2001: 579) among others has noted the connections between Habermasian 'communicative action' and the constructivist research agenda. In addition, the relational tradition stretching back to Marx through Mannheim and the Frankfurt school establishes a rich critical theoretical seam for constructivism to mine for intellectual resources.

As I have already noted, while some aspects of constructivist thought have been incorporated into the mainstream, I suggest that its strong critical heritage, in the vein of analysing cultural domination and ideology critique can help establish its credentials as a fundamentally critical approach for the understanding of neoliberal globalisation. As Linklater notes, "Critical theory invites observers to reflect upon the social construction and effects of knowledge and to consider how claims about neutrality can conceal the role knowledge plays in reproducing unsatisfactory social arrangements" (1996: 279). Increasingly, processes and discourses of globalisation have been associated with such 'unsatisfactory social arrangements'. As such, a critically informed and methodologically discursive constructivism is well equipped to address the 'problem' of neoliberal globalisation.

Critical/discursive constructivism and globalisation

Globalisation certainly consists of myriad material, and in particular technological, objects and processes. Interestingly though, the vast majority of these objective facts are simply the socially and culturally inert media by which 'objects' of communication (ideas, values, culture, norms, beliefs,) are transmitted and disseminated in the semiotic forms of discourse and text. When we think of the materiality of globalisation, the things we are able to touch and see, we tend to imagine various systems of communication technology. The emergence and expansion of this technology also seems to be coincidental with the most common historical alignment of the 'when' of globalisation, often considered to be since the emergence of worldwide capitalist regimes of accumulation which emerged in the late 16th century (Wallerstein 1974).⁴¹ We are generally considered to have become more 'global' largely in relation to the extent of the speed and extent of our communicative abilities. Hence globalisation has been described as the compression of space and time (Harvey 1989). This is not to posit a technological determinist argument but merely to acknowledge that globalisation is largely coterminous with the communications revolution. Admittedly, environmental conditions such as climate and disease are, and have of course always been, global or transnationally existent, disregarding any social borders but our *knowledge* of them as such has only been possible along with an ability to communicate and comprehend their simultaneous existence to humanity as a single society. What is global about globalisation is, more than anything, ideas and culture. These social facts should therefore be at the centre of the interpretation of globalisation. As discussed above, discourses of *political* globalisation are now however, more commonly associated with a supposed limited for states to determine their own

⁴¹ Although for an alternative account see the debate in the edited volume by Frank and Gills (1993). This period saw the invention of the Gutenberg printing press and the conquest by Europeans of the Americas, made possible by technological developments and necessitated by the desire for large quantities of base metals in order to circulate currency on a mass scale. See Boyer-Xambeu, M., Deleplace, G. and Lucien Gillard, L. (1994).

social and economic policies. This suggests a material force or capability which impinges on the democratic sovereignty of the modern state. Constructivism offers an alternative way of understanding this widespread assumption central to the hyper-globalisation thesis.

Hay (2002) has developed a critical constructivist approach which deploys a discursive analysis to attempt an understanding of how states can be seen to respond to ideas and discourses about globalisation as much as its supposed real or material constraints presented by that process. Assumptions of global capital mobility take centre stage in the discourses of neoliberal governments. According to both the often critical hyperglobalisation thesis and the normative neoliberal prescriptions of neoliberal open economy macroeconomics:

Sandwiched between the constraints of global financial markets and the exit options of mobile productive capital, national governments across the world have been forced to adopt increasingly similar (neoliberal) economic strategies which promote financial discipline, deregulation and prudent economic management. As global competition intensifies governments are increasingly unable to maintain existing levels of social protection or welfare state programmes without undermining the competitive position of domestic business and deterring much needed foreign direct investment. (Held and McGrew 2002: 55)

As a result of these assumptions, in an era of globalisation states engage in tax competition with each other in order to compete for foreign direct investment. Governments do not attempt to hide this competition but are explicit about its necessity and even celebrate it. It has been a defining aspect of various governments in the UK since the 1980s including Labour who in a White Paper declared "In the global economy of today we cannot compete in the old way. Capital is mobile" (DTI 1998). In 2000, responding to its perceived disadvantage to the US which had slashed its corporate tax and was thus attracting Canadian businesses to migrate south, cut its own corporate rate from 28% to 20%. The response of the corporate lobbying group Business Council on National Issues was to describe the cut as "timid" (ibid.: 55)

Since the mid-1990s OECD countries have seen a 3.5% reduction in corporate tax and overall tax rates on large US MNC's operating in developing countries has fallen from 54% in 1983 to 28% in 1996 (Held and McGrew 2002: 55). The consequences of this shift in taxation is that the burden falls more heavily on those who are less mobile than large corporations and financial interests such as citizens and smaller enterprises.

So the argument persists that if states do not engage in ongoing corporate tax reductions they will be penalised by capital flight and a decrease in net tax revenue. It is part of a deregulatory race to the bottom which also includes governments reducing environmental standards and labour/trades union rights which might also disincentivize foreign direct investment (FDI) (Brecher and Costello 2000: 6-10).

In order to demonstrate how it is ideas and discourses regarding globalisation which are the most significant areas of focus for a constructivist analysis, Hay (2002) envisages a *hypothetical*⁴² situation which acknowledges the accuracy of these assumptions, that capital mobility causes tax competition between states seeking investment. The cost of attempts to raise corporate taxation to fund education health and welfare is *assumed* to be immediate capital flight and a loss in net revenues.

Discursive power and the role of belief is crucial here for the following reasons. See figure 3 below (p.120). If governments believe the hyperglobalisation discourse to be true and cut taxes accordingly then FDI will remain (scenario 1). If they believe the discourse to be false when it were in fact correct, then they would not cut taxes and FDI would exit (scenario 2). On the other hand, if the hyperglobalisation discourse is false, simply a hollow threat on the part of MNC's, but governments believed it to be true, the result would be the same as scenario 1, taxes would be cut

⁴² Hay (2001), along with other writers (Cooke and Noble 1998; Swank 2001) argues that in fact these assumptions are highly implausible.

and FDI would remain (scenario 3). Crucially however, if the threat of capital flight is merely just that, at hollow ruse with no basis in reality, and government was to call the bluff of investors then the falsity of the discourse would be revealed. In scenario 4 then, taxes would not be cut yet FDI would remain.

This example demonstrates then, how the logic of inevitability which largely circumscribes debates around globalisation is significantly constructed through dominant discourses. Globalisation is significantly a social construction which may be revealed as such through a careful analysis of the discourses which work to uphold its legitimacy. According to Hay, the discursive construction of globalisation may play a crucial independent role in the generation of the effects invariably attributed to globalisation and invariably held to indicate its logic of inevitability" (2002:204). It illustrates the importance of making a careful distinction "between the effects of globalisation and the effects of dominant discourse of globalisation that might be challenged and resisted" (ibid.). Indeed, neoliberal discourses of globalisation will be developed in chapters six and seven, before doing so we must develop the important arguments which link ideology and discourse (chapter four) and show why the methodological resources of critical discourse analysis are particularly suitable for an analysis of aspects of late capitalism (chapter 6).

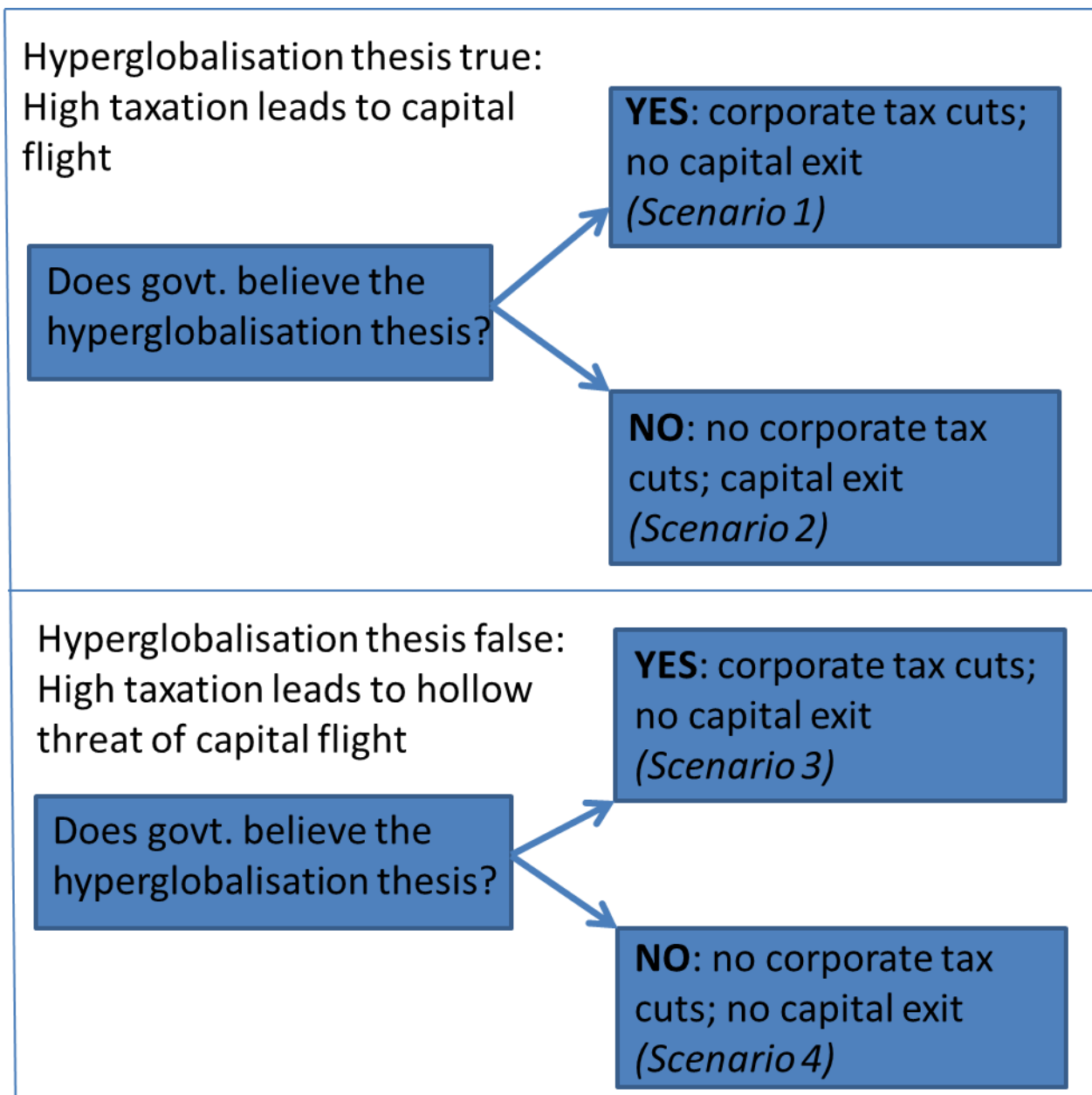


Fig. 3 from Hay 2002: 203

Ch. 4 Dominant Ideologies and the Concept of Hegemony

Introduction

Having discussed in the previous chapter the rather abstract notions of structure and agency in relation to political and socio-economic change, social science and World Politics/IPE in particular, my argument here proceeds to discuss more concrete and recognisable objects of analysis and normative lines of inquiry. What follows remains largely at the theoretical level but works toward developing an account of the more ontologically solid concerns associated with Marxian political analysis such as class and state. As suggested in the previous chapters, the analysis is honed to the identification of a dominant transnational class and the neoliberal/global state and how these (structures/agents) are becoming enmeshed with the power of neoliberal ideas and the discursive construction of consciousness, common sense, subjectivity and/or 'knowledge'. As such it works toward introducing some theoretical/practical 'praxeological' and methodological links and distinctions between the connected concepts of ideology and discourse to be further developed in chapter six.

In the development of this argument I will also extend Gramsci's key concept of hegemony in the light of more recent work of neo-Gramscian scholars in the direction of transnational classes (Overbeek 1993; Sklair 2000; Van der Pijl 1998), re-ordered relations of capital and forms of governance and state emerging at the global level (Robinson 2001, 2005; Shaw 2000; Hardt and Negri 2000) since the international restructuring and rescaling of the 1970s and the end of the Cold War.⁴³ This has been recognized variously and sometimes a little crudely as a shift from Fordism to

⁴³ Robert Cox was probably the first to bring the insights of Gramsci to the the attention of mainstream IR/IPE See Cox 1979, and also Gill, Gill and Law, Morton, Rupert, 1998; Sklair, 2001. There is also considerable overlap here with the Amsterdam School and the French Regulationist or *Annales* School. More recently the work of Polanyi has found a place in this canon (Mittleman and Chin; Burawoy), It is perhaps amiss to speak of 'schools' at all but I wish to highlight the interwoven and overlapping lines of enquiry which these apply to IR/IPE and World Politics.

post-Fordism and from Keynesianism to a post-Keynesian neoliberal 'new right' since the 1970s (Harvey 1990) and the supposed triumph of liberal capitalism with the collapse of Marxism-Leninism and the Soviet bloc and its satellite states (Fukuyama 1991; Little 1995). The focus on transformation is intended to point towards the significance of crisis periods in which the potential for new ideas and values to take root is enhanced.

In this chapter I will outline some of the theoretical and historical roots of this approach in the Marxian conceptions of ideology and how various subsequent critiques, refinements and elaborations in the vein of 'Western Marxism' have led to significant developments in our understanding of ideology and, more importantly, the performativity of ideational factors in relation to forms of political power. Such an analysis contributes to contemporary debates on power relations and political struggle through a reconsideration of the debates around 'the relative autonomy of the state', (specifically, Jessop's 'strategic relational approach' (2007) and how these can shed light on new transnational regimes, institutions of global governance and emergent discourses and practices of neoliberal governmentality.

In this and subsequent chapters however, I will attempt to integrate these theoretical debates and developments (new forms of class and state institutions) with the historical contexts and processes in which they continue to play out. As such, the arguments follow partly from the assertion of Kees van der Pijl that

only when the space in which economy and politics interact is extended to cover entire historical eras and larger-than-national complexes of states and society, can the cohesion underlying such interaction be defined in terms of the rise and decline of social classes. (1998:3)

Just what exactly might count as an appropriate temporal bracketing for tracing this process is obviously a matter of considerable importance and so debate around such an exercise has been wide ranging. As Bentley notes, "periodisation ranks among the more elusive tasks of historical

scholarship” (1996: 749). Without wishing to revise such worthwhile debates at length, a historical periodization of some kind must inevitably take place and the two main considerations would appear to be that it should be: a) brief enough to allow for an effective focus on key events and b), sufficiently broad in order to provide the necessary context for a better understanding of how such events are connected and constituted through other processes and events. As such, the approach followed herein is influenced in part by the work of Fernand Braudel and his 'three levels' approach, drawing a version of his second level which attempts a blend of the structural with the conjunctural or in Braudel's own words “the permanent and the ephemeral, the slow moving and the fast. These two aspects of reality [...] are always present in everyday life, which is a constant blend of what changes and what endures” (1972: 353).⁴⁴ I will begin by sketching out what I consider to be the key aspects of the period which provide the early context for the emergence of some of the theoretical developments which inform this study.

History, Theory and Culture

In order to appreciate and account for the rise to dominance of neoliberal ideas and ideology during the latter decades of the twentieth century, it is helpful to begin by tracing the historical contexts for the theoretical developments of ideological analysis that took place in the early to middle decades of crisis in 'the West' (1914-45) and in particular through the work of Antonio Gramsci. I will proceed to outline some of these contexts briefly here before considering the work of Marx and Engels and the ways in which their theories of ideology were enhanced elaborated by Gramsci and others who subsequently took up his ideas.

As I maintain, the significance of the changes touched upon above must be appreciated within a longer historical context than that since the nonetheless crucial crisis period of the 1970s (upon

⁴⁴ See also Macfarlane, A. (1996) Fernand Braudel and Global History. pdf available at: http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/TEXTS/BRAUDEL_revised.pdf

which much 'neo-Gramscian' and regulationist work tends to focus)⁴⁵ ranging back at least as far as the First World War (1914-18) and thus considering the collapse of the late nineteenth century liberal capitalist order and the emergence of a new Keynesian/Fordist compromise which sought to recover some sense of order from the chaos and ruins of 1914-45. My interpretation of this conjuncture also owes much to the work of Karl Polanyi and his (1944) magnum opus *The Great Transformation* which has come to prominence among the widespread attempts to account for the more recent return to *laissez-faire* ideas and principles of a self-regulating market which characterise the dominant ideology and practices of contemporary world politics.⁴⁶

The collapse of Polanyi's four key pillars of nineteenth century civilisation, which, he argued, led into the catastrophe of WWI and the subsequent political and socio-economic turmoil across Europe, saw the end of the unbounded optimism, certainty and confidence in the progress and expansion of western civilisation. More specifically and almost universally, following the Great Crash of 1929, it led to a decline in the appeal of so-called 'self-regulating markets' as reliable means to organise production and distribution. Polanyi took these four key institutional pillars to be: the self-regulating market, the balance of power system, the liberal state and the international gold standard,

But the fount and matrix of the system was the self-regulating market. It was this innovation which gave rise to a specific civilisation. The gold standard was merely an attempt to extend the domestic market system to the international field; the balance of power system was a superstructure erected upon and, partly, worked through the gold standard; the liberal state was

⁴⁵ A good deal of regulationist and neo-gramscian historical analysis in IR/IPE focuses predominantly on the collapse of the Bretton Woods system and the period following the collapse of fixed exchange rates. I concur that this is indeed a crucial factor and draws much attention as it marks the genesis of neoliberal practice in the Hayekian turn taken in the policies of the Thatcher and Reagan Governments from 1979 and 1980 respectively.

⁴⁶ Bloch, F. provides a good critical analysis of *The Great Transformation* and its importance for understanding the role of ideas in the construction of a market society. See 'Karl Polanyi and the Writing of the Great Transformation' in *Theory and Society*, 32/3 (2003) pp. 275-306

itself a creation of the self-regulating market. The key to the institutional system of the nineteenth century lay in the laws governing market economy. (1944:3)

Polanyi here betrays some considerable Marxist influence in his singling out of market economics as a key, while not explicitly determinant, factor in understanding processes of socio-historical change. While not known for expressing an explicit account of the role of ideology in its negative Marxist formulation, Polanyi identified the disembedding of the economy in what he termed 'market society' as a result of a particular set of powerful ideas associated with classical economic liberalism. He argued that such a process would entail a 'double movement', whereby society would react to this disembedding in an effort to re-situate economic processes in the wider social and cultural milieu. Polanyi's background in economic history and anthropology led him to this conclusion as much as (and perhaps more than) his Marxist influences. His extensive research into various economic cultures through history, where production and exchange were found to be almost universally embedded within deeper social and cultural practices and institutions, led Polanyi and his colleagues to consider a disembedded market society, akin to the contemporary neoliberal economic orthodoxy, as inherently unsustainable and dangerously unstable. In addition Polanyi rejected the economism, both of the neoclassical economics of von Mises but also the economic determinism which he saw in much of the work of Marx and stressed the importance of cultural factors in social change (Carlson 2006: 32).

As such, his ideas have been usefully developed in combination with those of Gramsci, most notably by Birchfield (1999) and Burawoy (2003). Despite their own reservations regarding Marx, his work has also informed the analysis of key neo-Marxists focusing on state forms such as Block (2003) and Jessop (2001, 2007). My brief point here is that to concentrate upon a critique of the capitalist mode of production, or market society, need not compel one to any kind of strictly determinist Marxist analysis. Indeed, Polanyi's work is useful for the task of cleansing such doctrines of the

economistic fallacy which have in many instances, bedevilled them. Block suggests that in a striking similarity to Gramsci, “Polanyi insisted that the working class had to win leadership of society by representing the interests of society as a whole.” (2003:278).

Indeed, the secret of success lies rather in the measure in which the groups are able to represent - by including in their own - the interests of others than themselves. To achieve this inclusion they will, in effect, often have to adapt their own interests to those of the wider groups which they aspire to lead. (Polanyi, 1934 in Block 2003: 278)

This notion of intellectual leadership, combined with Polanyi's sensitivity to cultural considerations drawn from his background in economic anthropology seems to resonate clearly with Gramsci's own concept of hegemony. It seems possible that, like Gramsci, Polanyi had come under the influence of Marx's then only recently published *Early Manuscripts* and the *German Ideology* and it is likely that for him also, these were crucial to a fuller understanding and contextualisation of the later works of the mature Marx.

Both thinkers (Gramsci and Polanyi) provide important and complimentary historico-political insights for understanding the crucial shift from Fordist to post-Fordist systems of production and the construction and collapse of the Keynesian 'consensus'.⁴⁷ This period ran roughly from Roosevelt's New Deal of the 1930s in the US, through the Marshall Plan for Europe and Beveridge in the UK, and right up until the widespread state/capitalist crises of the 1970s and the subsequent entrenchment of a neoliberal global political economy or 'regime of accumulation'. This period represents the conjuncture which this thesis posts as its socio-historical backdrop and will be examined further in the following chapters, providing a context for my historico-theoretical process-tracing and discursive analysis of neoliberalism.

⁴⁷ Their insights are also useful for the study of political transformation more generally

The importance and contemporary significance of Polanyi's work is summed up in Block and Somers who assert his:

account of the 1920s and 30s analyses the incompatibility of international capitalist arrangements with both democracy and the social reforms that had been won by the European working classes. This argument speaks directly to the present period in which the conflict between "legitimation and accumulation", "the limits of legitimacy", and the "crisis of democracy" have become central themes of social sciences; once again there appears to be a contradiction between the imperatives of the capitalist world system and the achievements of democratic politics. (1984:48)

Polanyi sought to develop a post-Marxist political and theoretical position, and an explicitly anti-capitalist socialism, which retained a strong commitment to individual freedom. His perspective then was something akin to that more recently outlined by Daniel Bell (1976) in that it combined an unrelenting socialist economics with a rather liberal outlook on politics. This kind of economic/politico-theoretical marriage is also ascribed to the Gramscian R. W. Cox by Susan Strange in her (1988) review of his seminal *Power, Production and World Order*. Due to my primary concerns with ideology and hegemony, this chapter is concerned more with the work of Gramsci but I will return later to some of the historical and anthropological arguments of Polanyi in my later discussion of Hayek and the historical emergence of neoliberalism through the activities of a transnational capitalist class/movement, where the insights of his economic anthropology provide a useful foil to the positions of the early neoliberals and the Austrian school of economics.

Rarely mentioned but acknowledged in the work of both Cox (1996:51) and Hudson (1999: 938) is the historicist influence upon Polanyi which also aligns him with Gramsci and those who have followed this line of scholarship in post-/neo-Marxist tradition of anti-capitalism. I should say something of these historicist developments of the post-WWI era before proceeding further, for

there is some connection between this theoretical turn in the study of history and the greater attention given to 'superstructural' elements of society than in western Marxism than that often attributed to the work of Marx himself. In short, the notion of *meaning* in historical analysis requires that at least some consideration of ideas and ideology be brought into such analyses and meaning as I have already intimated, is shaped by context.

Historicism

In terms of theoretical developments through this post-WWI era, the concept of historicism is key to understanding the antecedent roots of constructivist thought. It is also important in order to recognise the challenge to rationalism which the catastrophe of WWI had brought about in the intellectual circles of Europe and perhaps particularly in Germany.⁴⁸ Many of the key intellectual and political figures of the subsequent decades would have had direct experience of the human carnage permitted by modern industrialised warfare. The war also marked the disintegration of proletarian internationalism and the demise of the second international. The seemingly irrational descent into horror and mass slaughter, which ended the so-called *Belle Epoque*, had the effect of leading history, philosophy and socio-political thought to ask new questions and offer new kinds of answers beyond rationalism and logical positivism. In short, a (re)turn to historicism and a concern for the pivotal role of culture and meaning in social and historical analysis. The 1917 October revolution in Russia and the subsequent formation of the Soviet Union also cast a long and stark shadow across the fields of left/radical social theory and political practice throughout what Hobsbawm (1994) has termed 'the short twentieth century'. This inter-war period then is once again stressed as a key historical interregnum in which ideology seems to have gained a much more public and consciously deliberate form and essence. It must itself be considered in the light of preceding events.

⁴⁸ See Carlnaes, 1981: 172-180 on Mannheim and historicism in post-war Germany more generally

Particularly in Germany, but generally speaking of nineteenth century historiography, the study of history had been stripped of its philosophical garb and reduced to a rather crude fact-based affair in which cold detailed description and nothing more should be the object of history. To derive meaning from such developments ran against the reigning positivist orthodoxy of science. Thus, as R.G. Collingwood notes:

This led historians to adopt two rules of method in their treatment of facts: (i) Each fact was to be regarded as a thing capable of being ascertained by a separate act of cognition or process of research, and thus the total field of the historically knowable was cut up into an infinity of minute facts each to be separately considered. (ii) Each fact was to be thought of as not only independent of all the rest but as independent of the knower, so that all subjective elements (as they were called) in the historians point of view had to be eliminated. (1946: 131)

A key proponent of this approach to history was the German historian Leopold von Ranke who, according to E.H Carr, “piously believed that divine providence would take care of the meaning of history if he took care of the facts”⁴⁹ (1961:19). Indeed, according to Carr, this liberal nineteenth century perspective on history bore a close affinity with the conventional wisdom of laissez-faire economics which also stemmed from the serenity and self-confidence of that era.

The facts of history were themselves a demonstration of the supreme fact of a beneficent and apparently infinite progress toward higher things. This was the age of innocence, and historians walked in the Garden of Eden, without a scrap of philosophy to cover them, naked and unashamed before the god of history. (ibid. 20)

⁴⁹ Carr has been almost exclusively restricted in the realist tradition of IR to his Twenty Years Crisis which is invoked as a damning indictment on the liberal idealism which reigned supreme in the discipline during its early years but failed along with the League of Nations to provide an acceptable account of the causes of WWII. His work is therefore rarely considered in the critical/radical approaches which has been something of a considerable loss to this vein of international studies.

However, “the nature and outcome of the war [...] made a renewed inquiry into the meaning of history a seemingly ineluctable task” (Carlsnaes 1981: 173). The importance of morals, values and ideas began again to be recognised by historians and social theorists in their return to an historicism (or ‘historism’) that would be central to Western Marxism and the cultural/ideological analyses of Luckacs, Gramsci, Mannheim and Goldmann (see also Carlsnaes 1981: 176-179, Larrain 1979: 77-91 and 100-129, and somewhat critically, Poulantzas 1973: 197), all of whom granted a significant amount of their attention to the enhanced role for ideology that came with a move toward historicism in the intellectual circles of post-1918 Europe. It is not feasible to give an account of all of these authors valuable contributions to the development of ideology and its analysis in left intellectual circles,⁵⁰ instead I will focus later in the chapter on the work of Antonio Gramsci. This is due in part to the more political focus of his work in comparison to many of his contemporaries and the wider and more lasting influence of his analysis.

Expanding and Extending Ideology: The rise of mass societies and culture

This epistemological, ontological and even methodological turn toward matters of culture, values and ideas in the human sciences was expressed in the emergence of what has come to be referred to as ‘western Marxism’. Indeed, a study of politics and especially ideology in this period must almost unavoidably be one of western Marxism. In fact, with perhaps Gramsci as the partial exception,

the most constant and close concern were those [superstructures] ranking 'highest' in the hierarchy of distance from the economic infrastructure [...] it was not the State or Law which

⁵⁰ For an excellent overview see Anderson (1976) *Considerations on Western Marxism*.

provided the typical objects of its research. It was culture that held the central focus of its attention. (Anderson 1976: 75)

The widespread emergence of psychoanalysis and sociology beyond mere academic pursuits and into the realms of the corporate and political strategies of liberal and capitalist elites is a key feature of this period. The use of propaganda became increasingly commonplace as a tool of mass social control and the establishment of a public relations *industry*, utilising the new technologies of communication, in particular the moving image, gave a new impetus to the concept of ideology (see Gouldner, 1976; Bernays, 1923). Ideas and culture were no longer things simply obtained more or less directly but could be more easily constructed, manipulated and deployed and they would thus become more closely connected with increasingly complex relations and distributions of power. Crucially, these developments coincided and became bound up with the emerging and increasingly successful parliamentary (as opposed to revolutionary) challenges to free market liberal capitalism in the forms of Keynesian welfare economics, trade unionism and social democratic politics. While those on the left needed to reorient their thinking to account for these increasingly salient possibilities for proletarian education and emancipation within passive revolution, those on the economic right were left to pick up the pieces of a discredited liberalism which fell into crisis along with capitalism in the depression of the 1930s.

In part, following from the aforementioned revisions in Marxism towards closer attention to matters of culture and the growth of literary and cultural criticism, a more recent but related development has been a gradual drift of the 'intellectual left' since the late 1960s from Marxist structuralism to post-structuralism involving, among many other things, a shift in the object of analysis from ideology to discourse and the role of texts and semiotics. An understanding of ideology *and* discourse and their interrelationship is crucial and central to this thesis and is further developed through the next and later chapters. Before doing so, it is pertinent to begin with an

initial account of how ideology relates to the key institutions of class and state as they have been laid out in Marxist political theory. The aim here is little more than a cursory review and historiography of what I consider to be some of the key positions in these debates. I will then discuss how these positions and arguments shed light upon contemporary forms of state, globality and class fractions in order to give a contextual basis and introduction for my own analysis of particular aspects of neoliberal ideology and discourse.

To recap briefly, before proceeding with an account of ideology and its supposed relation to class conflict and domination, this thesis is concerned with how a neoliberal political economy, a particularly extreme free-market variant of capitalist ideology and practice, became dominant or *hegemonic* in the core states, van der Pijl's 'Lockean heartland' (1998:64-97), of the international system toward the end of the twentieth century. It seeks to understand how it has maintained legitimacy and, despite its failure to provide an acceptably sustainable, just or secure system of production, exchange and distribution, extended itself into a dominant *global* neoliberal political economy. I should therefore attempt to justify those arguments and questions to some extent. Firstly, I suggest that, considering the growing prominence given to ideas and values in increasingly mainstream constructivist analysis, ideological analysis and its critical roots have been afforded insufficient attention in recent social science and especially World Politics/IPE/IR.⁵¹ Secondly, as a normative inquiry which draws on substantial secondary evidence to demonstrate that the contemporary socio-economic and political system is problematic and precarious (both unjust and insecure), the analysis assumes a political and value-laden stance of its own (as must any social analysis). The argument is therefore articulated with an assumption that some kind of 'progressive'

⁵¹ A cursory glance at most introductory textbooks in IR reveals very little consideration of questions of ideology. Idealism in IR refers most commonly to the claims toward the possibilities of international society and an institutionalised world peace. The widespread debates between communitarian and cosmopolitan approaches to global governance largely restrict the debate to liberal terms of reference. The rise of constructivist analysis in mainstream IR presents a space for ideological analysis, but one which is yet to be adequately filled.

socio-historical change is desirable—a goal which is unavoidably part of the inquiry and in line then with the observation of Cox (1979:257) that:

Ideological analysis is, of course, a critics weapon and one most effectively used against the prevailing orthodoxies which, when stripped of their putative universality become seen as special pleading for some historically transient but presently entrenched interests. *Social science is never neutral.* (Cox 1979: 257, my emphasis)

The intimation here then is that social science itself contains ideological elements which need to be carefully considered, exposed and drawn out and as we shall see, this creates some significant problems for such an analysis. Such normative commitments are however much more widespread and explicit now than when Cox wrote his seminal article on the New International Economic Order (NIEO) in 1979. His work can be seen as a watershed for a critical IR/IPE⁵² which has flourished in recent decades to challenge the neglect of economic relations in IR and their impact upon distributions of power in the global system. New forms of exclusion, exploitation, insecurity and unsustainability, a condition which might be summarised as the problem of precarity, present us with problems which increasingly spill out of our traditionally conceived political spaces and must therefore be considered in the realm of global politics.

I argue that that such systemic problems and injustices are in some way structurally linked in important ways to our dominant institutions and processes (and the correspondingly dominant explanations/understandings) of socio-economic relations of production. Further, that the always evolving capitalist mode of production (CMP) develops in tandem with increasingly complex and interesting ideological/discursive components which not only justify and reify those problematic

⁵² Cox, in turn, pays his own respects to the earlier work of Susan Strange, an earlier pioneer of economic perspectives in IR in her path-breaking (1970) 'International Economics and International Relations: A Case of Mutual Neglect', *International Affairs* Vol. 46:2, pp. 304-315

relations but also curtail the material and epistemological opportunities for resistance and transformation. More specifically, the persistent problem to be identified is that alternative/progressive social and political possibilities continue to be circumscribed and delegitimised within this deepening and expanding logic of capitalist development. As such it is a sub-question of the classical: 'who gets what, when and why?' Such complex and long-standing problems are unlikely to be resolved in a single work of this nature or scope but they point towards the purpose of the analysis in the wider context of scholarship and critique.

Nevertheless, I assert that some re-examination and tentative reformulation of this old problem is required to account for the ever-changing forms and relations of capital and state which are increasingly manifest at the global level. Furthermore, I reiterate that, with some notable exceptions mentioned above, insufficient attention has been paid in IR/IPE to the role of ideology in contemporary socio-historical change and the myriad institutions through which it is transmitted and refracted. As suggested in the previous chapters, critical realism, discourse analysis and elements of post-structuralism represent some significant and useful advances upon classical Marxist traditions, in many ways some have broken entirely free from them. Yet, I argue, there is much to be retained and drawn from these traditions and an understanding of the problems of ideology critique in Marxian analysis which gives us some insight into those uncovered in the critical analysis of neoliberal discourse.

Marx and Marxism

Much of the most interesting and contentious work considered to lie within the Marxist tradition has revolved around some kind of explanation for the lack of revolutionary activity among the industrialised European proletariat through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In particular, the consolidation of the liberal democratic state throughout Europe and the Atlantic region effectively absorbed much of the socialist revolutionary fervour of the decades following

WWI. Later approaches, especially from the late 1950s, had to account for the growing evidence that the Marxist-Leninism of Soviet communism might not hold the emancipatory promise once accorded to it by some activists and scholars on the political left. The emphasis which Marx and Engels placed on this prediction (and the perversions of it which came to represent 'really existing (state) socialism' in the twentieth century) has posed some clear questions for historical materialism and indeed, for the project of democratic socialism itself. I suggest that despite these lingering questions, and in some ways partly in response to them, their work remains important as a starting point from which to interrogate the working discourses of neoliberal capitalism.

In their defence, Marx and Engels were pretty close to the action in terms of political activism and this aspect of their writing must be interpreted as directed at the immediate audience of revolutionary Europe, not the donnish comforts of academic scholarship. As A.J.P. Taylor (1963: 26) has noted, the revolutionary context in which Marx's ideas were formed, especially the time spent in Paris during 1843-44 (see also Callinicos, 1983:36) had a profound effect upon his key ideas (as must be the case with any historian, philosopher or social theorist). The period in which their most influential ideas evolved and were expressed in *The Communist Manifesto* (1847), as well as the long unpublished *German Ideology*, was one in which both radical and conservatives alike believed revolution to be imminent in industrialised central and Western Europe. Hardly surprising then that this *zeitgeist*, combined with the legacy of the relatively recent revolutions in the Americas from 1776 and, more significantly, France from 1789, led Marx and Engels to place such a phenomenon at the centre of their conception of history. Their reinterpreted ideas underpinned the revolution of October 1917 (see Lenin 1918), which itself fed back into, and once again fuelling, the strong revolutionary aspects and expectations of Marxist theory. Yet, even through the crisis strewn twentieth century, the international proletariat failed to successfully apprehend the means of production in anything like the way Marx and Engels had envisaged. This leaves us with the

difficult questions of what we should take from their historical materialism and how it might be deployed in the analysis of the contemporary context of neoliberal globalisation. In answer to this I suggest that historical materialism, as originated in the works of Marx and Engels and reformulated by their many followers, continues to offer the richest and most compelling account of the relationship between capitalism as an economic system and the political and ideological structures and practices which evolve in conjunction with it.

Marxism not only provides by far the most influential body of thought dedicated to the concept of ideology, but also connects it to an account of politics and the state which, I will argue, can be adapted and applied to study the institutional and *relational* aspects of globalisation as an emerging proto-global state. Indeed, concepts of ideology in relation to class domination have been developed almost exclusively at the level of the western, liberal-democratic nation-state, but this is clearly insufficient for understanding the contemporary transnational or 'globalised' nature of politics. Nevertheless, I shall argue that important insights developed at this level of the state provide at least an initial step upon which to gain a more coherent vision of the workings of structural and productive power at the global level. Before looking at Marxist debates regarding the state in some more detail, I will explore some of the key themes of Marx and Engels in their treatment of ideology. Yet, as these are both aspects of what Marx termed 'superstructures', their discussion in his works overlap considerably and as such must do so here.

Marx did not invent the concept of ideology, he inherited the term from Antoine Destutt de Tracy (Kennedy 1979) and revitalised it in the course of his own project and as we shall see, much of his approach to ideas/idealism/ideologies stand as a rejoinder to how such categories were deployed in Hegelian thought. Nor was the category of social class one formulated by Marx and Engels. Their lasting, and in almost every sense revolutionary, contribution, was to combine these concepts and to embed them in a theory of historical and dialectical materialism in which the social relations of

production are the primary focus. Such a politically bold and intellectually complex project unsurprisingly threw up many problems and inconsistencies in their work and few, if any, of these have been satisfactorily resolved. Nevertheless, the analysis of these concepts in the work of these two thinkers has left an indelible imprint on the history and development of social science and political practice over the last 150 years.

Despite my criticisms of some aspects of Marxism in the previous chapters (and those which follow in the present one), it nevertheless bequeaths a rich critical-theoretical heritage which should not be ignored in discussions of power, emancipation/social transformation and in particular, contemporary movements of 'anti-capitalism' and alter-globalisation. While still hailed by many as the anti-capitalist theorist *par excellence*, (see Callinicos 2003; Saad-Filho 2005), other critical voices have distanced themselves deliberately from his ideas for a number of reasons. Valid critical engagements with capitalism and forms of domination come from feminism, postcolonialism, anarchism, environmentalism etcetera, all of whom present strong and well-argued critiques of capitalism, yet reject many, and occasionally all the central claims of Marxism, and perhaps not without some good reasons. These reasons notwithstanding, my own position, and the one underpinning this thesis, is that Marxism has so heavily influenced the emergence of concepts of ideology, class domination and theories of the state, that an examination of his ideas and in particular their subsequent development in critical/normative traditions is necessary for a sufficient understanding of the debates which follow regarding the discursive representation of political struggles over 'globalisation', Imperialism/Empire and/or an emergent proto-global or transnational capitalist state. My concentration upon ideology and its part in class domination does not intend to refute such crucial critical analyses based on race, gender, ecology etcetera, but offers a critique parallel to these which may even serve to compliment them. Such an approach might be regarded as a necessary, if obviously insufficient, contribution to a fuller understanding

contemporary capitalism and the possibilities for social transformation and human emancipation.

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This thesis however considers and explores one aspect of Marxian thought in particular, that of ideology. This is due to its theoretical link to contemporary *critical* and constructivist concepts; applications of discourse theory and the possibilities for greater understanding of social change, or indeed the lack of it, which lie therein. However, as will become clear ideology, at least in Marxian analysis, must be related to the economic and political relations of domination and exploitation. In addition, it must attend to the political institutions through which such relations of power are exerted and challenged, classes and state forms. As Eagleton dramatically asserts:

The emergence of the concept of ideology, then, is no mere chapter in the history of ideas. On the contrary, it has the most intimate relation to revolutionary struggle and figures from the outset as a theoretical weapon of class warfare. It arrives on the scene inseparable from the material practices of the ideological state apparatuses, and is itself as a notion a theatre of contending ideological interests. (2007: 69)

Understandings of how neoliberal ideology operates through various discourses, becoming reflected and refracted in the myriad practices and institutions of market relations and changing forms state, requires an account of the mutually constitutive, or dialectic, relationship between these complex spheres and categories. As a critical political analysis, focusing upon processes of *legitimation* and new dimensions, distributions and dynamics of hegemony, the primary consideration will be the superstructural level(s) of culture/ideology and politics, and therefore as we shall see, might be considered by some 'purists' to move some distance from the classic texts of Marx and Engels. This is not to suggest other priorities or perspectives on these questions are

⁵³ For discussions of global governance and resistance from a Marxian perspective see in particular the contributions from Alejandro Colas and Mark Rupert in Armstrong, D., Farrell, T. and Maiguashca, B. (2003).

necessarily invalid, but simply to narrow the angle for this particular analysis to the political. Indeed, as Gramsci claimed:

If political science means science of the State, and the State is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules then it is obvious that *all essential questions of sociology are nothing other than questions of political science* (Gramsci, 1971:244, my emphasis).

That tradition of critical social and political thought which originated in the work of Marx and Engels has since undergone significant development, constant revision and broad divergence. Such work has come partly as a result of the remarkable persistence and resilience of the capitalist mode of production (in its various forms) despite its recurrent crises and deep contradictions. It is also due in large part to the inherent inconsistencies and ambiguities in the writings of Marx and Engels. Perhaps the most important debate of all in this tradition has been the requirement to counter the ahistoricist rigidity, reductionism, economism, determinism and scientism which so many critics, not to mention followers and acolytes, incorrectly drew from their work. In addition to these 'problems', many of which remain largely unresolved,⁵⁴ I suggest the significance of Marx lies largely in his political legacy, expressed famously in his *Theses on Feuerbach* [1845] and which also marks his gravestone: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it" (Marx 1977: 158).

⁵⁴ Such 'inconsistencies and ambiguities' obtain in the work of Marx and Engels in large part due to the fact that they identified and highlighted some of the most difficult and controversial problems of 'social science' and philosophy and oriented them to the emancipation of subjugated and exploited groups. They should be congratulated rather than castigated for this insight into the historical and dialectical 'development' of the human condition, despite the contradictions which are inevitably thrown up.

Indeed, it is the challenge to power and domination which marks out Marx from other key influential 'enlightenment philosophers'. Moreover, as the closing statement of the *Theses*, this short sentence lays out a pretty clear case for the importance to Marx of the transformatory aspect of ideas, philosophy, ideology, in actively shaping socio-historical change. As we shall see, this and other statements, concepts and formulations throw the many accusations of economism and determinism in the work of Marx into some considerable doubt and I will suggest that the most fruitful reading of Marxism takes from it a need to understand the *interrelationship* between ideas and materiality. As such I will argue that this, as we have seen, much like the concepts of agency and structure, is a mutually constitutive relationship. Rather than assuming that the socio-economic base directly determines our forms of consciousness, I suggest a more open reading which attempts to evaluate the extent to which the various material forms of capitalism constrain or *allow for* what forms of consciousness are possible and how ideas, in turn, are capable of redefining and contributing to the *altering* of that materiality.

Indeed, it is perhaps the various (mis)understandings of the base/superstructure model of society which have contributed to the numerous accusations of economism in Marxist theory. The key point here is perhaps our understanding or interpretation of the term determinism. Raymond Williams asserts that "any modern approach to a Marxist theory of culture must begin by considering the proposition of a determining base and a determined superstructure"(1973:3). While acknowledging that such a move from the more preferable 'social being determining consciousness', to that more figurative terminology "with its suggestion of a definite and fixed spatial relationship" (ibid.:3), has been problematic. Williams nevertheless concedes that in the transition from Marx to Marxism, and in the development of mainstream Marxism itself, the proposition of the determining base and the determined superstructure has been commonly held to be the key to Marxist cultural analysis" (ibid.:3). I concur with Williams that it remains a central

problem for Marxism and for some Marxists but not one that should bind us to any supposed orthodoxy or prohibit us from reading Marx in our own way. If we can be sure of anything it is that Marx would more approve of attempts to understand and transform *contemporary* social and political relations of domination than to compete for the ground of the 'true Marxism'. Nevertheless, as we shall see, in discussions of ideology, Marxist or otherwise, questions of determinism remain a key consideration, if not an object for attempted resolution. In what follows I will keep the concepts of co-determinacy and historical contingency to the fore.

As I have argued, a critical focus upon the nature and effects of, and potential challenges to, neoliberal capitalist discourse necessitates some account of Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches to ideology even if these, alone and unaltered, may prove to be insufficient in themselves. I have also suggested that the critical directions of social theory have not strayed as far from Marx as some might like to think. What follows is intended to highlight some of the contentions and controversies within Marxism (such as determinism) only in order to account for the myriad directions in which that tradition has been carried, and also to clarify my own position and arguments in regard to the role of ideas and ideology in the processes of legitimation in the contemporary capitalist system.

The form of capitalism with which we are now presented is obviously much altered from that of even three or four decades ago, let alone that of the mid/late-nineteenth century. New 'circuits' of capitalism and 'cultural political economy' (see Jessop, 2004; Thrift, 2001,2005; Best and Paterson 2010) require a drastic reworking of Marxist analysis, indeed one which purists may refute as Marxist in any real sense. No matter, as Burawoy notes "It is after all a theoretical tradition that claims ideas change with the material world which they seek to grasp and transform" (2003: 194). Nevertheless, I maintain that concepts of ideology, class and state, taken from and worked through in the Marxian tradition retain much of their usefulness and as such, a discussion of some of the most influential texts of Marx and Engels in this area is a pertinent starting point.

Marx(ism) and Ideology

Marx and Engels' approaches to ideology represent, initially at least, a reaction to the prevailing idealism which dominated the philosophical fashions of early-mid nineteenth century Europe and in particular Germany. This idealism, with its origins predominantly in the work of Immanuel Kant, itself developed as a counteraction to the doctrines of French and especially British empiricism, found in the liberal theories of Condillac, Locke, Berkeley and perhaps most importantly, Hume.⁵⁵ As Marx and Engels saw it, a profoundly misleading conception within German idealism, and in particular the powerful legacy of Hegel, was the attribution of an *independent* existence to ideas, thought and consciousness etcetera. Early evidence for this scepticism can be drawn from Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1977[1844]) where he stresses that while "thought and being are indeed distinct, at the same time they form a unity" (Marx 1977[1844]: 91) and furthermore emphasises "how consistent naturalism or humanism is distinguished from both idealism and materialism and constitutes at the same time their unifying truth." (ibid: 104) From these remarks it would seem that Marx had always intended his method to be a careful synthesis of materialism and idealism and indicates a clear rejection of their epistemological separation that would become less equivocal in his subsequent work and particularly that of his early followers.

Indeed, such a false dichotomy between the 'real' and the 'ideal' would probably appear to Marx as itself almost definitive of 'false consciousness' – deriving from the way in which philosophers and social theorists tended (as some still do) to regard themselves as existing outside and unaffected by the social/material context and historical process. This apparently inescapable paradox and problem appears in any attempt to study ideology, as recognised most famously by Mannheim, and more succinctly by Eagleton who asks: "If ideology sets out to examine the sources

⁵⁵ For an account of the shift from empiricism to idealism and the evolution of the term ideology see Hawkes, 1996, chapters 2-3 and also Carlsnaes, 1981, pp. 23 - 37

of human consciousness, what is to be said of the consciousness which performs this operation? Why should that particular mode of reason be immune from its own propositions about the material foundations of thought?" (2007: 69). The problem here is not then simply one of idealism, but its combination with rationalism and it is this which, according to Eagleton, Marx and Engels are rejecting, although not without some considerable problems.

Just as importantly perhaps, Marx rejected the idealist notion that ideas could themselves be considered as the root cause of social existence (Eagleton 1994:6). In contrast to this rather peculiar assumption, they set out to demonstrate that in their search for 'correct' thought, the spiritualism, romanticism and 'idealism' of the 'young Hegelians' challenged only language and phrases rather than coming to proper terms with problems in the real world. As such, according to Marx, reality was in fact concealed rather than revealed by such philosophy which, as a result, assumed the form of ideology. The vehement attack on the premises of this prevailing 'German ideology' later became one of the most influential texts of twentieth century (western) Marxism.

In their *German Ideology* (1977[1846]) then, Marx and Engels adapted a term which had previously corresponded to a neutral 'science of ideas' in the work of de Tracy, deploying it as a critical, negative, even pejorative description of the prevailing philosophical orthodoxy. In this work they laid out their materialist conception of history in which the relationship between human consciousness and existence was both reaffirmed and reversed. An often cited passage begins: "Men are the producers of their conceptions ideas, – real, active men as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these" (1977: 164). Here, as elsewhere in the *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels appear to already have in mind a particularly economic and labour oriented notion of social practice, activity or existence. This may have been the particular influence of Engels, who had recently witnessed at close hand the cutting edge technologies of industrialisation in the new factories and mills of Manchester

which were drawing in workers *en masse* and increasingly dividing their forms of labour into evermore specialised tasks. The passage proceeds to highlight the distortions through which ideology naturalises and de-historicises human consciousness which, they maintain,

can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process. (ibid.: 164)

By this analogy, they refer *negatively* to ideology as a sort of inverted mirror image of the real or material world which, under capitalism, is itself further subject to dehumanising and alienating social relations. They go on:

In direct contrast to German Philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, we ascend from earth to heaven. This is to say we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, and conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, live men and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life process... Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence... Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. (1977: 164)

In this last sentence we see a source of some controversy which recurs elsewhere in their work – this is the question of determination. While there are clear connections between what humans do in the world and their consciousness of it, a one way 'deterministic' account which has been drawn from this and other passages leads to charges of economism by many critics. Williams provides some defence of the term in his suggestion that in its secular sense we should think of

determination as a notion of “setting limits, exerting pressures” rather than one of total control (1973: 4). There is much more in the work of Marx and Engels themselves to throw such reductionism into question. I have already shown in the previous chapter that Marx was perfectly aware of the mutually constitutive relationship between objective structures and the subjective actions of agents which feed back into those structures.

Similar confusion stems from later key texts which further address these questions and introduce Marx's notion of base and superstructure into the equation. Crucially, and as I have suggested, perhaps mistakenly, their writings have here also been interpreted by many as suggesting that not just human consciousness, but also legal and political forms of state are somehow 'determined' entirely by its material conditions of economic production and exchange. This has been most frequently explained in terms of the base/superstructure model in which the nature of the economic base determines the socio-cultural, legal and political superstructure. All too exclusively, this 'classical' exposition of the materialist conception of history has been culled from the Preface to *A Critique of Political Economy* [1859] which reads:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. (1977: 389)

It is worthy of note here that Marx does not clearly explicate the connection between “the real [socio-economic] foundation” and the “legal and political superstructure” and “forms of social

consciousness” in any definite sense. Terms such as “on which arise” and “to which correspond” could easily be far less ambiguous and Marx is certainly not averse to plain speaking elsewhere when he wishes a point to be absolutely clear. His ambivalence on these issues might suggest at least that he was less than certain about some aspects of determinism, nevertheless, the relationship between these three *levels* (socio-economic, legal-political and cultural/intellectual) remains a crucial one for discussions of ideology and social/political theory. The imprint which this has left upon subsequent Marxian and critical analysis has been the interminable debates surrounding the 'relative autonomy' of these superstructural elements.

Before proceeding to discuss these key debates, we need to press further on the notion of how Marx connects his conception of ideology to the political categories of class and state, for it is this aspect which concerns us most for this particular project. If the course of history is directed by people's ideas, as assumed by the 'young Hegelians', then it is possible for society to be changed by challenging 'false' ideas with 'real' ones. In contrast, Marx and Engels regard such social illusions as being contained within real economic contradictions and the former can only be vanquished through the material actions of combating the latter. This approach then fuses the materialist theory of ideology with a revolutionary politics.

It is with the above examples of the non-reductionist elements of Marxism in mind that I proceed to discuss how ideology can be seen as a vital element of understanding political conflict and class struggle and that it plays an active role in the processes of historical change and social transformation. The concept of class has perhaps been even more central than ideology to the Marxist traditions of theory and activism throughout its history, and yet they must be understood in relation to each other in order to gain any understanding of how capitalism has survived as a dominant and now global economic system. This fusion receives its clearest and most powerful

exposition in Marx and Engels' frequently quoted passage from *The German Ideology*⁵⁶ and due to its key status in Marxist thought is worth quoting here at some length:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: ie, the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. (1977:176)

Here, the concepts of class struggle and ideological power are clearly interwoven and can be read as giving considerable importance to this relationship, a hint upon which many twentieth century 'western' Marxists were to pick up. But again, it is possible to draw at least two apparently contrasting interpretations from the above passage. In one sense it could suggest that the command which the ruling class exercises over the apparatus of intellectual production prevents any notion of a subordinate culture, all classes then are subsumed within the dominant bourgeois

⁵⁶ Although written in 1845-6, *The German Ideology* was not published until 1932. This may partly account for the lack of careful attention paid to the role of ideology in much Marxist analysis in the years preceding its publication. A notable exception to this lacuna is Georg Lukacs, whose *History and Class Consciousness* played an important role in developing a non-pejorative account of ideology that would also be influential upon Gramsci and his concept of hegemony. Lukacs regarded Marxism as the ideological expression of the proletariat and, according to Eagleton "this is at least one reason why the widespread view that ideology for him [Lukacs] is synonymous with false consciousness is simply mistaken" (2007: 94-95).

ideology. Less strongly, it might instead be interpreted as saying that due to the lack of institutions able to give expression to a culture/ideology of subordinate classes, their ideology is muted and therefore only the ideology of the ruling class might gain widespread dissemination and dominance. It is then possible to discern both strong and weak interpretations in the wider text of *The German Ideology*. Despite this ambivalence, we can draw some conclusions from Marx and Engel's other work which I think suggests a tendency toward the latter. For now, it is fair to say that for Marx and Engels, the notion of class struggle and politics generally entails an ideological aspect which can be seen to be equally important as the economic and political spheres or 'levels' of production and state. The emphasis found elsewhere on the hierarchical and determinist relationship between them seems reduced here.

Much of the confusion and contradiction regarding the concept of ideology in the *German Ideology* stems however from its treatment of ideology as both any form of socially determined thought, *and* something specific to the workings of the capitalist mode of production. Such confusion is perhaps exacerbated by an expansion of this later formulation of ideology in the later works and *Capital*. Eagleton suggests there are in fact three versions of ideology to be found in the texts discussed above:

Ideology can denote illusory or socially disconnected beliefs which see themselves as the ground of history, and which by distracting men and women from their actual social conditions (including the social determinants of their ideas), serve to sustain an oppressive political power ... Alternatively, Ideology can signify those ideas which directly express the material interests of the dominant social class, and which are useful in promoting its rule. ... Finally, ideology can be stretched to encompass all of the conceptual forms in which the class struggle as whole is fought out, which would presumably include the valid consciousness of politically revolutionary forces. (2007:83-84)

It may not be possible to reconcile these various meanings ascribed to the term ideology by Marx and Engels and therefore we can only draw out our own particular interpretations that are most suited to the specific arguments we are making. I do not wish to suggest that there is any one 'true' notion of ideology in their corpus of work but merely a few very useful theoretical tools for understanding the role of ideas and ideology for class domination in a capitalist society. This thesis seeks to examine processes of legitimation that might help maintain the unjust and alienating social relations characteristic of the global capitalist system of production. Bourgeois or capitalist ideology serves to smooth over, mystify and thus conceal the class antagonisms and contending interests which come to define such arrangements. It is the sharp critical edge of this 'pragmatic' reading of ideology that I wish to retain but not at the expense of losing the other 'epistemological' notions altogether. So, while this dissimulative or negative version is only *one*, elements of which I shall carry over to the critical discourse analysis of neoliberal capitalism, it is also necessary here to explore how other versions have been developed in subsequent 'Marxisms' in order to account for the ideological nature of class struggle through the crisis strewn twentieth century.

Alienation

It is the concept of alienation first outlined in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844) which carries Marx 'early' thoughts on ideology through to his 'mature' considerations of it in *Capital* (1867). It is therefore deserving of some mention before briefly outlining the account of ideology contained within those later considerations and how these came to influence subsequent Marxist theory and practice.

Marx's materialism was influenced by the work of Feuerbach whose own appropriation of Hegels notion of alienation was also taken up and advanced by Marx. Distinct from Feuerbach's inward, 'spiritual' resolution of this problem, "Marx contends that the only solution to the problem of self-alienation is to turn outwards towards the world and thus to an assault on the structures of the

existing state and society, since these are fundamentally responsible for man's life situation and thus for existing human self-alienation" (Carlsnaes, 1981: 41). Marx then, attempts to go beyond Feuerbach's universal notion of alienation, concentrating on the actions of humans in their concrete socio-historical existence. Humans find themselves alienated, both from each other and from their environment, due to their alienation from their own creations in certain social conditions which, in modernity, are those of capitalism. In such circumstances:

human powers, products and processes escape from the control of human subjects and come to assume an apparently autonomous existence. Estranged in this way from their agents, such phenomena then come to exert an imperious power over them, so that men and women submit to what are in fact products of their own activity as though they are an alien force. (Eagleton, 1991: 70)

When such social phenomena become unrecognisable as the products of human endeavour, it is then possible to regard them as 'material' and as such, accept their existence as natural and inevitable. Alienation then is closely linked to the concept of reification which Lukacs, later extends from its initial role in Marx's doctrine of commodity fetishism (ibid. 97) to suggest that "as the process [of capitalist development] advanced and forms became more complex and less direct, it became increasingly difficult and rare to find anyone penetrating the veil of reification (1971: 86).⁵⁷ This relationship between ideology and alienation which Lukacs recognises as deepening in the early decades of the twentieth century is most fully developed by Marx himself in the first part of *Das Kapital*, entitled 'Commodities and Money'.

Ideology in *Capital*

Capital presents a more complex and nuanced approach to ideology which addresses some of the concerns expressed above (and at the same time throwing up some others). According to Callinicos

⁵⁷ For an up to date and detailed account of the concept of reification see Honneth (2008).

(1983:128-130), Marx's account of commodity fetishism in *Capital* represents his only detailed account of how the supposed tensions between the pragmatic and epistemological. It develops a more structural account in that it demonstrates how the very structure of capitalism produces its own misperceptions.

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour [...] It is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. [...] To find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into a relation both with one another and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. (1977: 436)

This complex work develops the notion of ideology in a rather more internal and structural sense. According to Geras, "it analyses the mechanisms by which capitalist society necessarily appears to its agents as something other than it really is" (1971: 71). It thus still serves to conceal the essentially social character of labour and therefore retains the negative connotations found in the earlier works. However, ideology is no longer simply associated with the misleading 'intellectual' discourses of the ruling class but inheres within, and stems from, the nature of the interchange of produced goods in a 'free market' which thereby appear as natural and unalterable.

The final pattern of economic relations as seen on the surface, in their real existence and consequently in the conceptions by which the bearers and agents of these relations seek to understand them, is very much different from, and indeed quite the reverse of, their inner but concealed essential pattern and the conception corresponding to it. (Marx, 1972: vol 3.:209)

The focus here then is more upon the means by which ideology emanates not so much from the bourgeois *class*, as suggested in parts of the German Ideology, but from bourgeois *society* itself. Furthermore, since ideology here is considered to be reflecting material reality (albeit partial) and acting as a real force in itself, the sense in which it is an illusory phenomenon is considerably diminished. In *Capital* then, Marx no longer claims that under capitalism commodities merely *appear* to have a hold over social relations; he argues that they actually do. Ideology here then is not so much a case of reality being inverted in people's minds as it is of their consciousness reflecting a real material inversion. The concept of Ideology is thus shifted from the superstructure closer to, and even within the economic base. At the very least it indicates a peculiarly close relationship between the two which is not evident in any earlier discussion. If this is indeed the case then we need, as Etienne Balibar suggests "to think both the real and the imaginary within ideology" (1988:168) instead of dichotomising these realms and seeing them as merely external to each other.

As Callinicos notes, the concept of ideology in *Capital* is closely connected to the labour theory of value (1983:129; see also Rubin, 1972). An example of the centrality of this recurring theme of the labour market and its key relation to ideological power is demonstrated in another much quoted excerpt from later in *Capital*.

The consumption of labour power is completed as in the case of every other commodity outside the limits of the market or the sphere of circulation. Accompanied by Mr. Moneybags and by the possessor of labour power we therefore take leave for a time of this noisy sphere ... and follow them both into the hidden abode of production ... Here we shall see at last force the secret of profit-making.

This sphere that we are deserting, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour goes on is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property

and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, say of labour power, are constrained only by their own free will. They contract as free agents, and the agreement they come to is but the form in which they give legal expression to their common will. Equality because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to himself. (1977: 454-5)

The account which Marx presents here encapsulates the important role of a liberal political philosophy and ideology in capitalist society. The inequality and exploitation that are inherent within capitalist relations of production are hidden by a narrative of free trade and exchange in the sphere of circulation. Focus upon these surface narratives gives rise to the liberal discourse of individual freedom, equality and even democracy. Seen in this way, the possibilities for emancipation appear increasingly remote as the system proceeds to further atomise social and productive processes in the ever-expanding and deepening division of labour.

An especially interesting and persuasive account of ideology in Marx's *Capital* is provided by John Mepham (1979). Following his argument regarding the unsatisfactory nature of the early Marx's exposition of ideology in comparison with more substantial one provided in *Capital*, Mepham draws an analogy between the ideological aspects of the value form of money as expressed by Marx in *Capital* and the production of meaning in linguistic and sign systems. Mepham states that "The conditions for the production of ideology are the conditions for the production of a language..." (1994: 227) These "systematically generative interconnections" are suggested by Marx:

Whenever, by an exchange, we equate as values our different products, by that very act, we also equate as human labour the different kinds of labour expended upon them. *We are not aware of this, nevertheless we do it.* Value, therefore, does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is *value rather that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic.* Later on, we try to

decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social products [that is, the value-form]; for to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language.
(Marx, quoted in Mephram, 1979: 227)

Drawing on this analogy, between systems of signification and the structural abstraction/mystification of the value form in capitalist society, Mephram writes:

The puzzle of money is especially like the puzzle of language. Each element, taken by itself (a word, a coin) seems to have the power to function in an efficacious act (of reference, of exchange) by virtue of having a particular property (a meaning, a value). In each case the puzzle derives from the contrast between the efficacy of the element on the one hand and the arbitrariness of its substance (sounds, inscriptions, bits of metal or paper) on the other. (1994: 228)

Mephram thus identifies one of the key initial moves towards the study of discourse as a means for understanding ideology and its legitimating role in capitalism. Mephram's account of ideology in capital introduces themes which I will discuss further in Chapter six which touching on the writings of Volosinov continues to plot a trajectory in critical thought and historiography from Marxist notions of ideology to post-Marxist attention to discourse and the deployment of a critical discourse analysis of neoliberalism.

Before doing so, I will return to the more immediate successors to Marx in the early twentieth century. In doing so we should remind ourselves that *The German Ideology*, which contains perhaps now the most rehearsed account of the role of ideology in structures and processes of class domination, remained unpublished until the mid-1920s and therefore played no part in the Marxist canon until after the First World War, the 1917 October Revolution and the Wall Street Crash. The key influence upon the approach to ideology taken by the Second International was provided chiefly

by the later works of Marx and Engels. Subsequent developments had a wider canon of their work and ideas from which to draw.

Ideology after Marx

Considering the rich and complex nature of the work of Marx, it has long been regarded as a matter of some regret that following his death, Marxism fell into a period of intellectual stagnation in which the more nuanced and valuable aspects of his oeuvre were sacrificed to a rather stale and mechanical determinism (Eagleton, 1994:31) This positivist and economistic inheritance certainly owes something to aspects of Marx's ambivalent treatment of ideology and the model of base and superstructure in which it resides. However, the orthodoxies of Marxism-Leninism also became even more stringent after the 1917 October revolution and continued to be perverted in that rather stultifying direction under the doctrines of Stalinism. Until his death in 1895, Engels struggled against the early moves in this economistic oversimplification of Marxism as shown in his 1890 letter to Bloch where he writes:

According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Neither Marx nor I have ever asserted more than this. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic factor is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, absurd phrase. (from Scanlan 1973: 12)

I do not wish to revisit these debates here⁵⁸ but rather pursue the slightly later 'historicist' legacy of Marx and Engels's notions of ideology associated with the early work of Lukacs and in particular, Gramsci's concept of hegemony. However, in order to comprehend the account of ideology

⁵⁸ On this see also I. Lasher (trans.), 1975, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Selected Correspondence* Progress Publishers: Moscow, in which see the letters to C. Schmidt, 5th Aug 1890, (p.292) and 27th Oct 1890, (p.402); also letter to Mehring, 14th July 1893, (p.435) and letter to Borgius, 25th Jan 1894, "What these gentlemen all lack is dialectics. They always see only cause here, effect there ... This is an empty abstraction." (442).

provided by Lukacs, it is necessary to turn briefly to the employment of the term by Lenin. While Lenin's reputation may have come to be unfairly tarnished by the developments in Russia after 1917, his influence on the corpus of Marxism should not be underestimated. Lenin, along with others such as Labriola, Plekhanov, Kautsky and Bernstein, began to strip the concept of ideology of its necessarily negative and pejorative connotations found in much of the work of Marx and Engels. Bernstein even went so far as to suggest that Marxism itself could be considered as an ideology as he simply identified the term with any set of ideals, a move with which none of his critics, including Plekhanov and Lenin, took issue (Larrain 1988:53). It was amid this 'loosening' of the term then that Lenin came to ascribe an ideological position to the proletariat as well as the bourgeoisie. Thus in his famous (1902) pamphlet *What is to be done?* He asserts that:

the *only* choice is – either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a 'third' ideology and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology) hence to belittle the socialist ideology *in any way to turn aside from it in the slightest degree* means to strengthen the bourgeois ideology (Lenin 1970: 89-90).

For Lenin however, socialist ideology was distinct from proletarian consciousness. Earlier in *What is to be done?* he states that “the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness” (80). The fomentation of socialist ideology required its introduction, he believed, by professional revolutionaries with a superior grasp of political reality so that class political consciousness “could only be brought to the workers only from the outside” (80). The absence of such a political consciousness developed by the external leadership of intellectuals from outside would leave the proletariat susceptible to bourgeois ideology, of which, according to Lenin, trade-unionism was a part. This susceptibility, Lenin argues, is due largely to the much longer history and greater development of bourgeois ideology in which it has risen to the

status of a ruling ideology. Furthermore “it possesses *immeasurably* more means for being spread” (90-91) and thus appears as the natural way of looking at things, a kind of common sense.

Lenin's high political status in the communist movement, especially after 1917, provided this new broader, neutral conception of ideology with significant intellectual currency and it was particularly influential on the early ideas and work of Lukacs, in particular his magisterial *History and Class Consciousness* (1971[1922], hereafter *HCC*). There has been some considerable disagreement over whether Lukacs equated ideology primarily with false consciousness or if he in fact assumed Lenin's more neutral deployment of the term. Lucien Goldmann's analysis of Lukacs' early work appears to demonstrate a reading in favour of the former case. Asserting that in his early essays “the falseness or truth of consciousness, its ideological or non-ideological character, are determined by its relationship with production returns” (1977: 55). Goldmann claims that in “*History and Class consciousness*, the ideological element of these different types of consciousness would consist in misunderstanding the economic relation”. This displays an explicit assumption by Goldmann that Lukacs' understanding of ideological consciousness remains essentially negative as in the work of Marx and Engels. Many other writers have since also followed this rather restrictive interpretation of Lukacs⁵⁹ but as Eagleton notes, “the widespread notion that ideology for him is synonymous with false consciousness is simply mistaken.” (1991:95). Eagleton bases this claim on the recognition that Lukacs retained a notion of Marxism as “the ideological expression of the proletariat in its efforts to liberate itself (Lukacs, 1968 :258-259) and also that historical materialism represents “the ideology of the embattled proletariat” (228). Nevertheless, while it is fair to say that the retention of an almost exclusively Marxist frame of reference by Lukacs in *HCC* does imbue his use of the term with a primarily critical and pejorative edge when discussing *bourgeois* ideology, it seems clear that Lukacs was also happy with using the term as it had been expanded in the work of Lenin.

⁵⁹ For a discussion and more examples see Larrain (1977: 57-60)

Indeed, Larrain suggests that Lukacs' draws his primary conception of ideology from Lenin and that in his view *HCC* is, among other things, "a brilliant philosophical commentary on, and justification of *What is to be done?*" (1988:55). There are certainly some similarities, the most striking of which refers to the distinction noted above between a limited spontaneous proletarian consciousness which expresses itself in trade-unionism and a theoretical or 'scientific' form of revolutionary consciousness introduced from outside. A similar distinction is presented by Lukacs, who seems to recognise in the former "the psychologically describable and explicable ideas which men form about their situation in life" while in the latter "the appropriate and rational reactions 'imputed' to a particular typical position in the process of production" (1971:51). However, Larrain notes that such a Leninist filiation may stem at least in part from Lukacs' desire to appear more orthodox than his natural intellectual inclination (see Larrain 1988, note 15). Indeed, Stedman-Jones (1971: 28) also reminds us that Lukacs renounced the text following its condemnation by the Comintern and retreated from an active political role.

Despite this, and perhaps in large part because of it, Lukacs' contribution to the development of the concept of ideology in *HCC*, and the increasing attention paid to matters of culture in subsequent scholarship, has been hugely influential in what has come to be known as western Marxism. In addition, as Eagleton suggests, his "writings on class-consciousness rank among the richest, most original documents of twentieth century Marxism" (1991:99). It is therefore with some regret that constraints of space prevent a more thorough examination of his work and he is considered here and briefly in what follows as primarily a key vehicle for highlighting the notion of reification and also as a theoretical and historiographical bridge to the more explicitly political work of his colleague, Antonio Gramsci.

Aside from the connections with Lenin's discussions on ideology, the key text of Lukacs for this purpose is still his *HCC* which takes as its primary source, the first chapter of Marx's *Capital* which

he said “contains within itself the whole of historical materialism and the whole self-knowledge of the proletariat seen as the knowledge of capitalist society” (1971:170). As indicated in the above discussion of *Capital*, the fetishism of commodity exchange presupposes the existence of the value of an object in the form of another commodity. While that value is clearly not materially present, it is nevertheless actually present. In such a way, commodity exchange is based on the ability of a symbol, figure or, as noted in Mepham, a sign, to become real. This all depends upon the introduction of a common denominator, such as money, which is able to indicate the value of objects that are materially distinct, but as though they are the same. Such an illusion of equivalence is achieved through the medium of human labour which is commodified, in short, the transformation of interpersonal, human relations, into relations between commodities. Thus the world of things comes to rule human beings by way of objective laws which appear independent of them “human beings thus become objects, passive spectators of a process which structures their lives for them” (McLellan 1995: 23).

This process of abstraction and the objectification of human activity requires a particular kind of bourgeois ideology or false consciousness. Lukacs refers to this specific aspect of bourgeois ideology as reification and identifies it as “the central structural problem of capitalist society in all aspects” (1971: 83). It “requires that society should learn to satisfy all its needs in terms of commodity exchange” (91) and as such “the basic structure of reification can be found in all the social forms of modern capitalism” (171). Lukacs holds that it represents “the necessary immediate reality of every person [and as such every class] living in capitalist society” (197). However, while for the bourgeoisie, such a state of alienated affairs is seen to be acceptable and suitable to their class interests, for the proletariat it represents an ideological barrier to their emancipation. More importantly, it also contained the seeds from which their own true or 'ascribed' consciousness would flower. It is, for Lukacs, a class uniquely positioned, both subjectively and historically, to

recognise the interests of the whole. This “moment of revolutionary recognition arrives when the working class acknowledges this alienated world as its own confiscated creation, reclaiming it through political praxis” (Eagleton, 1991: 98). Indeed, Lukacs warns against any suggestion of historical inevitability of revolution as espoused in large parts of the Second International and in the last passage of *Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat*, (the main part and central argument of *HCC*) he reminds us:

History is at its least automatic when it is the consciousness of the proletariat that is at issue. The truth that the old intuitive, mechanistic materialism could not grasp turns out to be doubly true for the proletariat, namely that it can be transformed and liberated only by its own actions, and that 'the educator must be educated'. The objective economic evolution could do no more than create the position of the proletariat in the production process. It was this position which determined its point of view. But the objective evolution could only give the proletariat the opportunity and the necessity to change society. Any transformation can only come about as the product of the – free – action of the proletariat itself. (208-9)

Lukacs also saw in the process of reification the philosophical tendency to separate the ideal from the material. This relationship between thought and existence, Lukacs notes, had already been identified as a concern of Marx and Engels in stating their own separation from Hegel's notion of how the “spirit alienates itself in the material world” (Hawkes, 1996: 110). He notes that Marx and Engels “comprehend the concepts in our heads once more materialistically – as reflections of this or that stage of the absolute concept” (in Lukacs, 1971: 199). Lukacs agrees with their subsequent clarification and caveat that “the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made *things*, but a complex of *processes*” (in Lukacs, 1971:200) but asks “if there are no things, what is 'reflected' in thought?” (1971: 200) Such 'reflection theories' are, for Lukacs, deeply suspect whichever way around the duality is conceived “it is immaterial whether things are to be regarded as reflections of concepts or whether concepts are reflections of things” (1971: 200) What counts

for Lukacs is the need for the essential unity of the ideal and the material to be recognised in the consciousness of the proletariat.

Thus thought and existence are not identical in the sense that they 'correspond' to each other, or 'reflect' each other, that they 'run parallel' to each other or 'coincide' with each other (all expressions that conceal a rigid duality. Their identity is that they are aspects of one and the same real historical and dialectical process. (1971:204)

Writing some decades after Marx had developed this ground-breaking analysis of ideology in *Capital*, Lukacs had the 'benefit' of witnessing the further and deeper complexity and specialisation of the industrialised labour process and the concomitantly more pronounced alienation and atomisation of society. Alongside the rapid emergence and expansion of new technologies of mass communication,⁶⁰ this development was an important inspiration for, and central element of, his conception of alienation and critique of reification. He regarded this atomisation as preventing bourgeois *and* proletarian classes alike from realising the *relational* aspect of identity and from seeing the wholeness or 'totality' of human existence. However, he believed the recognition of the totality by the proletariat to be not only immanent in their unique historical subjectivity, but also imminent in that reification appeared close to its apogee and subsequent demise.

For Lukacs then, the solution to overcoming this reified consciousness is a recognition of the social 'totality' – a resolution of what he saw in the division of labour as “the destruction of every image of the whole” (1971:103). This would be achieved through the reunification of subject and object, that had been, in Eagleton's words, “torn grievously asunder by the effects of reification” (1991: 98), on the part of the proletariat. Appearing again to draw loosely on the work of Lenin, this is made possible through the attainment of some true or ascribed class consciousness (as opposed to

⁶⁰ For an exemplary discussion and analysis of the importance of these technological developments for the analysis of cultural and ideological forms and processes see Thompson (1990) esp. chapter 4 and 5.

the empirically given or partial psychological consciousness which he equates with false consciousness). In distinction from Lenin though, there is less emphasis that this is the role of an external party or intelligentsia by Lukacs.

As such, Lukacs employs Hegel's notion of totality and the 'Absolute Idea' but this is purchased at the price of incorporating more than a little Hegelian idealism for which he has been criticised. Also, his uncritical adoption of the later Marx's insistence that the commodity form represents the secret essence of all ideological consciousness in capitalist society leaves his account open to similar accusations of economism.⁶¹ For Larrain, the most compelling criticism of Lukacs is that he consistently overrates the role of ideology and ideological struggle to the point where they seem to substitute for real political practice and real class struggle" (1983:77). Indeed, in Lukacs' attempt to counter what he saw as the determinist elements of Marx's materialism he bent the stick too far in the other direction, a mistake which he would himself much later come to acknowledge in the preface of the 1967 edition of HCC.

In defence of Lukacs, he was formulating these ideas in the years immediately following the First World War and the October Revolution in Russia. Capitalism had never seemed so vulnerable (nor has it since) and the proletariat appeared to be on the very brink of fulfilling the role which Marx and Engels had laid out for it over 70 years earlier. In such periods of crisis, Lukacs' work serves as a timely reminder not to underestimate the extraordinary adaptability of capitalist social relations and the centrality of power of ideology and reification in this ability to respond flexibly to crisis and transformation with new developments and reinventions of itself.

⁶¹ For a more detailed discussion of Lukacs critics and a response to them see Larrain, (1983)

Gramsci

Writing some years later, and from the considerably less comfortable circumstances of a fascist gaol in Mussolini's Italy, Lukacs' fellow Communist Party member, Antonio Gramsci, unsurprisingly saw things a little differently and somewhat less optimistically. The formation of the Factory Councils movement in Turin, in which Gramsci had been heavily involved, had been defeated in 1920 and this experience had shaped the ideas which he would put to paper in the following years.

Largely as a result of this dire context in which he wrote them, it is widely acknowledged, indeed even a commonplace, that his most substantial political works, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971) (hereafter SPN), and the concepts outlined and discussed therein provide some difficulties of interpretation. Joseph Femia notes that what we are left with "is an unfinished work, replete with elliptical passages, disorders, apparent contradictions, and esoteric allusions, a labyrinth of ideas that—for all their suggestiveness—are often opaque and undeveloped" (1979: 472). These difficulties may partly account for the huge amount of scholarly comment, disagreement and controversy accorded them. Such attention is however warranted due to the extremely rich and nuanced account of ideology, power and social change contained beneath the "surface pandemonium" (ibid.:472). Despite the inevitable controversies which stem from these difficult aspects of Gramsci's writing, his work provides an invaluable insight into the ways in which ideas become embedded in society and how new ideas might emerge to challenge their dominance.

As such, the work of Gramsci has had a huge impact on Marxian thought and left intellectual circles generally, particularly in relation to the growth of interest since the 1960s in matters of culture and ideology. Gramsci's key contribution to these debates has been the concept hegemony which has become undeniably central to any sophisticated consideration of the workings of power. Indeed, the first footnote in Steven Lukes seminal work *Power* is a reference to the concept as eluded and developed by Gramsci. Lukes summarises the basis of Gramsci's project succinctly in the simple

question “how is consent to capitalist exploitation secured under contemporary conditions, in particular democratic ones?” (2005:7). The question remains as relevant today as in the time of Gramsci's writing. My intention here is to present an overview of his concept of hegemony in relation to his considerations of state and civil society as they were derived from the work of Marx and Engels. Having done so, I will attempt to use these insights to explore some of the ideological underpinnings of the contemporary global neoliberal regime and institutional matrix. This will involve a critique of liberal accounts of global governance, global civil society and global citizenship which lack sufficient consideration and hence understanding of class politics such as is provided by Marxian theories of the state.

As I have suggested, the key theoretical contribution of Gramsci, at least with respect to ideology and class domination, has been his concept of hegemony. It is not to be confused with the application of the term in much IR literature where it is used, mostly by realists, to define the overarching power of one particular state in the international system such as the US in the 30-40 years following WWII. This refers to the Greek origins of hegemony or *hegemonia* which referred to the dominance or leadership of a particular city-state. However, the term was also used by Lenin to describe the political leadership of the working class and this is from where Gramsci inherited the term and developed it significantly into a more complex system of political analysis and strategy. In Lenin's *Two Tactics of Social Democracy*, hegemony or *gegemoniya*, assumes a largely strategic and instrumental meaning whereby the proletariat should assume a leading role against Tsarist absolutism due to the undeveloped nature of the Russian bourgeoisie. So while Gramsci credits 'Ilich' with “the concept and the fact of hegemony” (1971:381), he develops it almost beyond recognition to incorporate a significant cultural emphasis and applies it to the complex

phenomenon of bourgeois rule in stable capitalist societies.⁶² In his initial treatments of the term though, he demonstrates a Leninist slant as can be shown in *Some Aspects of the Southern Question* where Gramsci discusses the need to abandon what he called the corporatism (factionism) of the subordinate classes. This was necessary to win over the Southern intellectuals in order to influence the mass of the peasantry (see Mouffe, 1979:178-179). Demonstrating his initial association of hegemony with intellectual leadership, Gramsci writes:

The Turin communists posed concretely the question of the 'hegemony of the proletariat': ie. Of the social basis of the proletarian dictatorship and the workers' State. The proletariat can become the leading and the dominant class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of alliances which allows it to mobilise the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois State. In Italy, in the real class relations which exist there, this means the extent that it succeeds in gaining the consent of the broad peasant masses. (1978: 443)

Similar problems of factionalism and leadership are almost a defining aspect of contemporary transnational anti-capitalist politics as can be seen in the multiple divisions that characterise the Global Justice Movement and which generates much of the most intense debate within the world and European social forums. Issues of intellectual direction; industrial workers in the 'North' and peasant farmers in the 'South'; urban working classes and indigenous peoples; the secular and the religious to mention just a few of many, these persistent divisions within the exploited subordinate classes and our inability to transcend them were problems familiar to Gramsci and ones to which his ideas were primarily directed. Even in this early and somewhat 'Leninist' manifestation then, hegemony and the problems which it aims to address are shown to be as relevant today as in Gramsci's time. There exists no concrete strategic concept which has yet surpassed Gramsci's

⁶² Perry Anderson (1977) provides a detailed discussion of these roots of the term in Russian revolutionary thought in 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', *New Left Review* 100 pp. 15-18.

formulation for the purpose of achieving an effective class consciousness for the task of social transformation.

The fact that Gramsci's conception of hegemony evolved somewhat over time goes some way to explaining some of the inconsistencies which have been recognised in regard to the definition of the term. Femia notes that while Gramsci “does, at one point in his notebooks, explicitly use the term as intellectual and moral leadership *plus* political domination ... it is almost invariably clear from the context that he conceives it purely in terms of ideological leadership, and that he wishes to counter-pose it to the moment of force” (1981: 25). The counter-position of force and consent maps roughly onto the areas of state and civil society that Gramsci illustrates using Machiavelli's mythological figure of the centaur (half animal half human). In times of crisis, the state must resort increasing to the use of physical force and coercion. This does not necessarily entail a decrease in the operation of ideological aspects of hegemony, indeed their deployment may also be scaled up and the need for consensualisation increased. However, the crisis manifests itself initially in civil society and reveals fissures in the system of hegemonic domination where opportunities for counter-hegemony are enhanced. For Gramsci then, the concept of crisis is central to the goal of political transformation.

In every country the process is different, although the content is the same. And the content is the crisis of the ruling class's hegemony which occurs either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses (war for example), or because huge masses [...] have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution. A 'crisis of authority' is spoken of: this is precisely the crisis of hegemony, or general crisis of the State. (Gramsci 1971: 210)

Here Gramsci invokes the concept of crisis, inherent in capitalist modes of production, to connect the concepts of hegemony and the state in an exploration of the possibilities for social and political transformation. Crisis however, is to be regarded as more than merely the accumulation of various contradictions “but rather to a moment of transition, a moment of decisive intervention” (Hay 1996: 253). Before proceeding to discuss these central categories of hegemony, state and revolutionary strategy, an effort should be made to note in some more detail how the concept was extended from the Leninist version mentioned above.

We can identify three basic stages in the development of political consciousness which lead to class hegemony. The 'economic-corporate' level represents the first and most elementary stage: “A tradesman feels obliged to stand by another tradesman, a manufacturer by another manufacturer , but the tradesman does not yet feel solidarity with the manufacturer” (Gramsci 1971: 181). As the need to organise beyond professional groups to wider social groups is recognised, a second level is attained where “consciousness is reached of the solidarity of interests among all the members of a social class – but still in the purely economic field. Already at this juncture the problem of the State is posed – but only in terms of winning politico-juridical equality with the ruling groups”(ibid.:181). Thus participation in administration and even legislation is permitted, but only within the established structures of that system. Finally, “one becomes aware that one’s own corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too”(181). For Gramsci, the specific political moment is located here, where attempts to forge a unity among economic, political and intellectual objectives by way of an ideological struggle is achieved and thereby “placing all the questions around which the struggle rages on a 'universal', not a corporate level, thereby creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate ones” (181-2).

This is a key passage for understanding the development of Gramsci's concept of hegemony which marks a considerable move forward from the way in which it is conceived in *Some Aspects of the Southern Question* (1926). It is no longer here then, a simple issue of political alliances, but rather a comprehensive fusion of political and economic concerns with intellectual and moral objectives. It is thus a relational understanding of the ideational and the material and a recognition of the need to combine our analysis of ideology with that of the state.

The contemporary analogy here, and one which I shall develop in more detail below, is with the current class fractions and divisions in global civil society. The neoliberal or capitalist class is a hegemonic class due to the fact that it has more successfully transcended the divisions of nationality, religion, ethnicity which still characterise many elements of the subordinated classes. The ruling class rules effectively in its own interests as it has achieved a certain hegemonic status, while those who are ruled and subordinated remain disablingly factionalised, or in Gramsci's term, corporate. This is not to suggest that no such factions exist within the hegemonic class, but merely that they are less pronounced and disabling for that strata.

For Gramsci then, and the majority of those who have applied and adapted his work, the concept of hegemony serves to explain the dominance of one class over others through a consideration of processes of *legitimation* and the construction of *consent*. This stems from Gramsci's recognition that the predominant form of power in advanced liberal democratic states derives from the institutions and practices that generate *consent* rather than coercion. By this, he was referring to the proliferation of values and ideas through the expanding circuits of media, systems of mass education and other so-called private bodies in civil society. Indeed, as we shall see, the relationship between civil society and the state is a crucial one for Gramsci and his concept of hegemony. According to Boggs, "hegemony was always a matter of the degree of equilibrium that obtains between state and civil society" (1976:40). Gramsci's concentration on these aspects

makes his contributions invaluable for understanding ideology in contemporary capitalist societies and has led writers such as Texier (1979) to refer to him as the 'theorist of the superstructures'.

In many ways, hegemony represents Gramsci's explanation for the failure of the proletarian masses to fulfil the revolutionary transformation in the way predicted by Marx and Engels. It is for this reason that his work still commands so much attention in contemporary critical debates around capitalism, particularly in relation to the core institutions of the global economy (including the SIACS) where the superstructural apparatuses of civil society are most fully developed. His work has been particularly influential in the critical tradition of IR/IPE which seeks to understand these institutions in order to conceive of their transformation.

This project is rooted primarily in the work of Robert Cox, and subsequently developed by pioneers such as Stephen Gill and Kees van der Pijl through their respective concepts of 'world order' and the 'transnational capitalist class' (Cox 1987, 1996; Gill 1990, 1993b, 2003; van der Pijl, 1984, 1998; see also Robinson 2004), and also in the application of his valuable conception of civil society to International/global context (Colas 2002; Lipschutz 2005). Indeed, a recognition of potential agents for alternative world orders as well as ideological institutions of neoliberal hegemony, both residing within the broad concept of civil society, combined with repeated calls to 'bring the state back in' to global political analysis, have kept Gramsci's ideas at the forefront of much critical analysis.

Before briefly outlining how Gramsci's work has been put to work in IR/IPE since the 1980's, it is helpful to return to the work of Marx on politics and the state and the rather ambiguous legacy this has bequeathed to Gramsci and other neo-Marxists. In particular, the conceptual relationship of the economic base to cultural, legal and political superstructures upon which Gramsci placed so much emphasis.

It is worth remembering though, that Marx was, first and foremost, a theorist of capitalism and considerations of political forms were often secondary to this. Furthermore, this tendency appears to have become more pronounced in his later writings.⁶³ While he is most famous for predicting the inevitable overthrow of capitalism by the proletariat and was active in the communist movement, he did not lay out any kind of plan for the specific system of politics that would replace it. Indeed some have suggested that politics as we understand it would end as a result of such a transformation. Throughout his vast body of work however, capitalism was theorised in different ways and in various social and political contexts.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to show how Marxism provides an account, or perhaps accounts, of ideology which connect in particular to the economic but also the political structures and practices of society. The chapter has traced the concept of ideology in Marxism from the early works of Marx and Engels, through their later works and on into the treatment given to it by the Marxist and neo-marxists of the early twentieth century. I have recognised the close connection that ideology has with the concepts of class and alienation and discussed the centrality of ideology (however conceived) to the maintenance of systems of rule in modern societies and in particular capitalist societies. I will now proceed to discuss the political sociology of Marxism in some more detail, specifically, theories of the state. I will attempt to do this as far as possible in the light of the preceding discussion of ideology. In so doing we are moving toward a rather structural perspective of politics and ideology, but one which attempts to preserve, as far as possible, sufficient space and potential for human agency and social transformation. As the above suggests however, such progressive transformations toward more just and sustainable systems of production, exchange

⁶³ We should not assume from this however that Marx considered the politics of the state unimportant as *Das Kapital* represents an unfinished work and many consider the state to have been an intended subject for a later volume.

and distribution may only become possible in the light of a more complete understanding of the ideological and political structures which maintain and legitimise the contemporary global system of neoliberal capitalism.

Ch. 5 State, Class and Globality

It is fair to say that the state, while once the primary and central concept of political science and theory has dropped from the radar of many political commentators, at least in terms of the analysis of its forms and functions rather than simply its behaviour. Indeed, many accounts of sociology, politics and international relations have, in recent decades, either decried or celebrated the supposed decline, retreat or 'withering away' of the state to make way in their analyses for something else called 'globalisation'.⁶⁴ Despite the ubiquity of this term, its analytical usefulness remains somewhat of a mystery largely due to the fact that it seems to contain, entail, constitute or explain almost any socio-political development since the early 1980's. What many of these accounts fail to recognise is that these processes of globalisation have been heavily driven and directed by a handful of capitalist states. In particular the group of states that represent the core of the capitalist world economy.⁶⁵ That these states and their variously neoliberal governments have since invoked the supposed exigencies of a globalised market economy in order to protect and further entrench the interests of a dominant class, should not distract from the capitalist state as an important object of analysis, quite the reverse. Indeed, this contradiction alone should direct us to pay closer attention to the capitalist state in contemporary world politics, not merely as the sole or major agent in the global system, as in mainstream realist and neorealist International Relations

⁶⁴ See chapter 1

⁶⁵ Included in this 'core' of SIACS would be the key capitalist states of the Trilateral Commission (US, Western Europe and Japan) and the G7 (US, UK, France, West Germany, Italy, Canada and Japan) both of which emerged during the crises of the early-mid 1970's. The G7 has since grown with the expansion of global capitalism to include seats for Russia and what have come to be known as the 'plus five states' (China, Brazil, Mexico, India and South Africa). The EU now also holds a seat given to the standing president of the European Commission. These countries and their governments also dominate other key global organisations such as the UNSC, WTO, IMF, World Bank and are further buttressed by longer standing intergovernmental institutions such as the 20(+10) states of the OECD

theories, but more importantly as the key institutional arbiter of power and wealth distribution between and amongst classes and citizens. It is the social relations *within* the modern state where I begin this analysis, before proceeding later in the chapter to an account of how such class relations are extending above and beyond and to questions regarding global governance, global civil society and the supposed emergence of a proto-global or *transnational* state form.

The most cursory glance at the historical development of the modern state will reveal that it is not a fixed set of institutions, apparatus, practices and procedures. It is a set of politically, geographically and historically diverse and contingent relations which, much like ideology, resists any attempt to define it accurately. Jessop defines the state very broadly as “a distinct ensemble of institutions and organisations whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on the members of society in the name of their common interest or general will” (1990: 341). Such a broad definition seems of little value until one considers the myriad forms which the state has assumed over space and time. Indeed, we will see how an interpretation of Marx and Engels' ideas about politics founders on the very different nature of the state in the mid-nineteenth century from those forms we confront today.

Indeed, one of the major difficulties with evaluating Marxist, or indeed any, theories of the state is the constantly changing nature of this 'institutional ensemble' throughout history. The increased scholarly attention paid to this phenomenon since the 1960's has come largely as a result of its considerable expansion and consolidation through the last century. At the time when Hegel, Marx and Engels were writing, the state was a fairly novel form of political organisation. The world was still dominated by a handful of empires which would come to fall apart in varying degrees during and after WWI, to be replaced by a proliferation of 'self-determining' national-states in Europe, the

Middle East, South America (and after WWII, Africa).⁶⁶ With this extraordinary and unprecedented explosion of nation-states in Europe and the Ottoman Empire after WWI, greater attention had to be afforded to them and their interrelations by political scientists⁶⁷ and sociologists and not least Marxists such as Gramsci, than had been the case for Marx himself. Marxian theory and political practice had to develop positions and strategies on the basis of rapidly emerging and changing political forms, much like the contemporary conjuncture of 'globalisation'.

Following WWII, the last remnants of those empires (at least as forms of direct rule) would also fall away into a worldwide system of modern or 'nation'-states. The heyday or high water mark of this specific form of political organisation would come in the decades between the 1930's and 1970's when states were considered legally and popularly 'sovereign' and internal intervention in society and the economy was also seen to be increasing without much sign of any reversal of that trend. In terms of Marxian political economy this was the period in which capitalism appeared to fuse most strongly with state forms in what came in many contexts to be called a system of state monopoly capitalism (stamocap). Here the state was clearly and quite understandably seen to be acting "on behalf of monopoly capital in the twofold attempt to secure the political and ideological conditions necessary to capital accumulation and to secure various economic conditions that can no longer be realised through the operation of market forces" (Jessop, 1982:14). This apparent fusion of state and capital led to a burgeoning interest and proliferation of critical analyses on the capitalist state and a renewed attention to the writings of the classical Marxists in futile attempts to dredge up the 'true' Marxist theory of the state. As recent decades have seen a supposed 'retreat of the state', such interest has waned somewhat.

⁶⁶ Colas (2007:4) for instance, remarks on the relative novelty of the contemporary division of the political world into around "200 territorially exclusive and politically independent national states."

⁶⁷ It is noteworthy that the discipline of International Relations itself emerged largely in response to the new ubiquity of this political form with the first departments set up in Aberystwyth in 1919 and the LSE in 1920.

As a result of this historical vacillation and evolution of the state form, we should not expect to find, in the canon of political analysis on the state, any magic theoretical bullet which pins down its essential nature and purpose. Nor, despite numerous valiant attempts, do we find any succinct definition which is satisfactory. In terms of what the state does, Max Weber famously points out that “there is scarcely any task that some political association has not taken in hand, and there is no task that one could say has always been peculiar and exclusive to those associations which are designated as political ones: today, the state” (1948: 77). The changing nature of the state is currently perhaps more rapid and profound than at any time in its history and so attempting a theory of it is now perhaps something more of a fool’s errand than ever. Nevertheless, we cannot simply ignore this key phenomenon of Politics and International Relations and must attempt to address it in its historico-relational form. That is, to understand it as neither simply a subject nor object but as a set of historically contingent social power relations embodied within particular and historically specific sets of political institutions, “or more precisely the material condensation of such a relationship among classes and class fractions, such as this is expressed within the State in a necessarily specific form.” (Poulantzas, 1978:128-129). This should not mean however that questions about how the state *might* act *if* it were a unified subject, or even what might constitute its unity as an object, are beyond consideration. In addition, we might ask, as Jessop does: “how do social actors come to act *as if* the state were a real subject or a simple instrument.” (2008:3) Prior to addressing these questions and applying them to the emergent institutional forms of the contemporary 'global' juncture, I will return once again to the work of Marx and Engels and their various scribblings on the state before moving on to continue the discuss Gramsci's concept of hegemony which develops a more nuanced analysis of the relation between ideology, the state and civil society.

Marx and Engels on the state.

As had been his intention with the concept of class, Marx had planned an entire chapter on the state for his magnum opus *Capital* but died before its completion. What we are left with from him instead is a scattering of diverse statements and references covering nearly 40 years and bequeathing an ambiguity to rival and even surpass his confusing exposition of ideology. Indeed, it was Engels rather than Marx who first adumbrated a class theory of the state but was no more successful in developing this insight into a complete and coherent analysis of the capitalist state. Much of the disagreement and animosity surrounding the state that developed within Marxism during the 20th century can be attributed to this rather sporadic treatment accorded to it by Marx and Engels. I do not intend here to engage in a detailed analysis of their work on the State, such accounts already fill many shelves (see Holloway and Picciotto (eds.) 1978; Clarke (ed.) 1991; Jessop, 1982 ch.1; Miliband 1965. Nevertheless, some mention needs to be made of just from where the disagreements originate and how the different interpretations by later Marxists can be traced back to various formulations provided by Marx, Engels and also Lenin. I will therefore review some of the key components of classical Marxism on the state as a point of departure.

The legacy of Marx in this area is unquestionably ambiguous to the extent that this has become one of the few uncontested claims with regard to this field of thought. It is due in large part to the so-called epistemological shift in his work which has led many to refer to the 'early Marx' in contrast to his 'mature' work. The early work, coming before his break from the Young Hegelians demonstrated a remarkable level of support, at least for the *idea* of the state. Hegel famously asserted in his theory of the state that this political form represented the final act in historical progression and commenting on this influential view, Marx noted that such a philosophy "looks on the state as the great organism in which legal, moral and political freedom must be realised and in

which the individual citizen in obeying the laws of the state only obeys the natural laws of his own reason" (Marx 1975a: 202)

Marx's ideas regarding the state evolved partly in tandem with those of ideology. In his work with Engels from the *German Ideology* onwards, both were relegated to the epiphenomenal realm of superstructures. His early work is similarly imprinted with aspects of Hegelian philosophy as shown by his articles for the *Rheinische Zeitung* during 1842-3. In these he still appeared to regard the state, at least in the abstract, as the guardian of the general interest of society and law as the potential embodiment of political freedom. Even in these early works however, Marx began to show signs of his recognition and emphasis of external pressures upon the actions of the state. In an article on the plight of the Moselle wine growers for instance, he suggests that "in investigating a situation *concerning the state* one is all too easily tempted to overlook the *objective nature of the circumstances* and to explain everything by the *will* of the persons concerned. However, there are circumstances which determine the actions of private persons and individual authorities and which are as independent of them as the method of breathing" (Marx 1975a: 337). This suggests his increasing awareness of, and deep interest in, the complex interrelationship between the spheres of politics and economics. For Marx then, the state must be evaluated in light of the structured relations of production which exert pressure upon the whole of society. As such, political institutions are clearly implicated in the reproduction of the exploitative conditions for the extraction of surplus value. It is possible to see then that the nature of the state was becoming for Marx, an important consideration but one perhaps secondary to the mode of production.

Marx's attention to 'the objective nature of circumstances' highlights the general direction his later or 'mature' ideas would take and his move away from Hegelian thought which began in his *Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State* (1843). This work represents Marx's first detailed considerations on the state and despite its title, it still bears a fundamentally Hegelian hallmark. For Hegel, the

separation between the state and civil society is resolved by the state. The state is understood as an 'ideal collective citizen' in which the general and communal interests of all its subjects will come to be expressed. For Marx however, such an account is a pure mystification. While accepting the distinction between state and civil society, alongside Hegel's understanding of the latter as "the sphere of economic life in which the individual's relations with others are governed by selfish needs and individual interests" (1843[1975]: 59). Marx regards these relations as essentially conflictual and thus denies the possibility that the state can act in the general interest. As a prime function of the state is to reinforce property rights, it therefore actually works to reproduce such unequal and conflictual relations in civil society.

In another major early work, *On the Jewish Question* (1843b), Marx argued that in abstracting from the differences of wealth and power in society, the state claimed to represent subjects *as if* they were equal citizens. However, such supposed equality was, according to Marx, merely formal, a political abstraction which retained differences in private property through their allocation to the private realm of civil society and their effect upon real lives was thus excluded from public debate. The inherently ideological nature of such arrangements were to be found, according to Marx, in the apparently 'natural' inequalities of wealth and power which were presupposed in that institutional separation of state and society (1843:36-8). Furthermore, the domination of civil society by the interests of capital fed into the juridical orientation of the state thus leading it toward the defence of private property. (see M&E, 1846: 131-2, 169-71)

Generally, capitalism was understood by Marx as a set of contradictory relations of production which conditioned the whole realm of human association. Profit or 'surplus value' is, according to Marx, the primary goal of capitalism and social relations are progressively subordinated to this imperative. However, concurrently, the exploitative and socially detrimental consequences of this system are obscured with the assistance of the state and his work displays a growing dissatisfaction

with its role. Thus in *The Holy Family* (1844), written with Engels, comes his first explicit denunciation of the state as a site of class antagonism, but first and foremost an instrument of bourgeois domination. In this work they describe the 'democratic representative state' as 'the perfect modern state' by which Miliband asserts that they mean "the perfect modern *bourgeois* state" (1983:8). For the early Marx, such contradictions could only be resolved through 'true democracy'. "Democracy is the solution to the *riddle* of every constitution. In it we find the constitution founded on its true ground: *real human beings* and the *real people*; not merely *implicitly* and in essence but in *existence* and in reality". (Marx, 1975:87)

In contrast to those who dismiss such early works of Marx as irredeemably Hegelian such as Althusser (1969: 32-4, 62-4, 249), Avineri claims that such arguments for a clear epistemological break cannot be sustained and posits the notion that Marx's later formulations of communism were already present within his notion of 'true democracy', arguing that:

It can be shown clearly that what Marx terms 'democracy' is not fundamentally different from what he will later call 'communism', and that in any case this 'democracy' is based on 'man's communist essence'. It also follows that the decisive transition in Marx's intellectual development was not from radical democracy to communism, any more than it was from idealism to materialism. [...] The *Critique* contains ample material to show that Marx envisages in 1843 a society based on the abolition of private property and on the disappearance of the state. Briefly, the *Communist Manifesto* is immanent in the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Avineri 1968: 34; see also Coletti (1975, 41-2).

Such a position is backed up by the distinction, made by Marx in his essay *On the Jewish Question*, between formal political emancipation and real human emancipation which he associated with 'true democracy'. In this work, Marx defends the project of political emancipation but distinguishes this from full social emancipation that is only possible in a new society, in which practical need has

been humanised and the commercial spirit abolished. Such a qualitatively new social order can only be realised through the complete transcendence of bourgeois society and as such, the bourgeois, or liberal democratic state. The following year, in his 'Introduction' to *the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, Marx identified the proletariat as the agents of such a transformation and thereby laying the foundations for a class theory of the state in his emerging theory of historical materialism. (Miliband, 1983:7)

Perhaps the best known and most complete formulation of this is to be found in *The German Ideology* where Marx and Engels provide a fairly systematic theory of the state as a class state. Their assertion that the state is “nothing more than the form of organisation which the bourgeois necessarily adopt both for internal and external purposes, for the mutual guarantee of their property and interest” (1845/6[1974]:80). Just a few years later in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848[1977]) this claim was restated in the more famous declaration that “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole Bourgeoisie” and it noted further that political power expressed through the state represents “the organised power of one class for oppressing another” (1977:238).

According to Miliband, this represents the classical Marxist view of the state and the only one to be found in the canon of Marxism-Leninism. However, with respect to the writings of Marx and Engels, it can only be seen to represent a primary view of the state as it is possible to find at least one other version in the classical texts although Miliband maintains that “it is inaccurate to hold this up as of similar status with the first” (1983:9). This primary view of the state is also subject to some qualifications which introduce some flexibility into this instrumental account. These qualifications demonstrate that Marx was keen to clarify and apply his theories in light of the contemporary historical evidence. In writing during the politically turbulent years of 1848-9 he notes in *The Class struggles in France* that splits in the bourgeoisie or capitalist class excluded some elements from

state rule while others from previously dominant landowning classes fused with a faction of the bourgeoisie to govern the state in their own interests, so that:

It was not the French bourgeoisie that ruled under Louis Phillippe, but one faction of it: bankers, stock-exchange kings, railway kings, owners of coal and iron mines and forests, a part of the landed proprietors associated with them – the so-called finance aristocracy. It sat on the throne, it dictated laws in the chambers, it distributed public offices. (Marx, 1977:286)

Further on in the text Marx continues in the same vein, noting how this “finance aristocracy made the laws, was at the head of the administration of the state, had command of all the organised public authorities [and] dominated public opinion through the actual state of affairs ... and the non-ruling factions of the French bourgeoisie cried: corruption” (Marx, 1977: 288-9) This may seem a rather trivial point as the state, still for Marx, clearly acts to secure the vested interests of wealth and privilege in its protection of property rights. It is a point worth making however to remind us how forms of class state are historically contingent social entities and not fixed abstract categories. It also illustrates that while the capitalist class may not always, or even ever, correspond exactly to the ruling class, bourgeois social relations appear to be effectively maintained by the state throughout. On the other hand, fissures within the capitalist class and animosity between its factional elements may, in certain circumstances and periods of crisis, present opportunities for effective progressive resistance and the potential transformation of those social relations.

The Brumaire

A better known and more extreme manifestation of Marx's exceptions to his 'primary' perspective on the relationship between the state and the capitalist class can be found in historical examples of individual, authoritarian rule where the state, in exceptional circumstances, can become relatively autonomous, not just from the bourgeoisie, but from the ruling class however it is

constituted and factionalised. The most notable example of this in the work of Marx is to be found in his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852). This striking and powerful piece of historical and political writing is particularly interesting for Marx's views on class and state.

On the December 2nd 1851, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, elected President of the 2nd French Republic and nephew of the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, dissolved the Legislative Assembly and occupied the parliamentary chamber, arresting the leaders of the main political parties. The following year he declared himself Emperor Napoleon III. This *coup d'etat* ended the parliamentary republican regime which many radicals and socialist had hoped would, following the democratic revolutions of 1848, develop into a more substantial and progressive programme of social and economic reform and emancipation. In the event however, the coup represented a final and crushing defeat for these ideals, all the more galling as it had mobilised a substantial section of the subordinate classes (peasants, army) to this end. Importantly though, the coup had apparently altered the nature and role of the state significantly: "Only under the second Bonaparte does the state seem to have made itself truly independent. As against civil society, the state machine has consolidated its position" (1977:317). Here Marx appears to suggest that this Bonapartist state is independent of any specific class. However, a few lines further on he says: "And yet the state power is not suspended in mid-air, Bonaparte represents a class, and the most numerous French class at that, the small-holding peasants" (317). Miliband suggests however that the use of the term 'represent' is misleading and the peasants merely "*hoped* to have their interests represented ... But this does not turn Louis Bonaparte or the state into the mere instrument of their will; at most it may limit the executive's freedom of action" (Miliband, 1983: 11). Indeed, according to Marx, Bonaparte's real loyalties and interest lay with the bourgeoisie:

Bonaparte feels it to be his mission to safeguard 'bourgeois order'. But the strength of the bourgeois order lies in the middle class. He looks on himself therefore, as the representative of

the middle class and issues decrees in this sense. Nevertheless, he is somebody solely due to the fact that he has broken the political power of this middle class and daily breaks it anew. Consequently, he looks upon himself as the adversary of the political and literary power of the middle class. But by protecting its material power he generates its political power anew. (1977:322)

On this and other evidence, Miliband is able to claim that the Bonapartist state was “called into being, for the purpose of maintaining and strengthening the existing social order and the domination of capital over labour” (1983:12). Indeed, writing later in *The Civil War in France*, Marx claims that Bonapartism had succeeded the bourgeois parliamentary Republic due to the fact “it was the only form of government possible at a time when the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of ruling the nation” (1977: 541) furthermore the Empire came to represent:

the most prostituted and the ultimate form of the State power which nascent middle class society had commenced to elaborate as a means of its own emancipation from feudalism, and which full grown bourgeois society had finally transformed into a means for the enslavement of labour by capital. (ibid. 541)

Marx clearly indicates in these works that the apparatus of the bourgeois state can never be directed towards progressive ends and an important aspect of the revolution is the inevitable destruction of this institution by the proletariat. In doing so:

Marx implies that the state is a system of political domination whose effectiveness is to be found in its institutional structure as much as in the social categories, fractions or classes that control it ... [T]he analysis of the inherent bias of the system of political representation and state intervention is logically prior to an examination of the social forces that manage to wield state power. (Jessop 1982: 27)

Lenin and Gramsci

By the time Lenin came to write *The State and Revolution* in 1917, the capitalist state had become a more salient feature of political life than had been the case for most of Marx's life. It is thus unsurprising then that it played a more central role in Lenin's work. Lenin's account of the state is able to trace a discernible lineage to the one provided by Marx in *The Civil War in France* and the basic theme which he outlines in *The State and Revolution* is of the state as "an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another" (1969:46.) Lenin's famous assertion that the capitalist liberal democratic state represents the 'best possible shell' for capitalism added little more to the assertions of Marx and Engels of its primary role as instrument for class domination. His own particular contribution is the notion of a violent destruction of the state in the process of proletarian revolution "the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power." (1969:46)

However, other subsequent Marxist analysis (Kautsky, Plekhanov) failed to address questions of the state in any systematic or satisfactory fashion. According to Poulantzas, the reasons for this

derived from the fact that the dominant conception of these Internationals was a deviation, *economism*, which is generally accompanied by an absence of revolutionary strategy and objectives—even when it takes a 'leftist' or Luxemburgist form. In effect, economism considers that other levels of social reality, including the State, are simple epiphenomena reducible to the economic 'base'. Thereby a specific study of the State becomes superfluous. (1969: 68 NLR)

Before proceeding to examine some of the more recent developments in Marxian state theory and how they might be helpful in better understanding aspects of the neoliberal ideology which

underpins and legitimates contemporary discourses and practices of global governance, I will briefly consider the debates over the relative autonomy of the capitalist state which broke out in the late 1960's and early 70's.

The emergence of these debates might be viewed partly as a result of the extraordinary growth of state power and its increased role in the everyday affairs of citizens during the period of embedded liberalism of the post WWII era. The explosion of neo-Marxist literature on the state appeared during the period where some on the Left were becoming anxious about its intrusive role in people's lives and its relation to capitalist interests. With a hint of irony, the welfare state, which had been the brainchild and creation of centre-left social democratic parties in Europe and the US, increasingly appeared to many as securing the CMP. The unrest of 1968, which almost brought down the state in France and gave it a significant scare across a number of other countries in the core SIACS, drew the attention of a number of Marxist scholars. A Marxist political science or political theory (as distinct from sociology and social theory) would need to develop a theory of the state, the prime and at that time almost exclusive location of politics.

Miliband, Poulantzas and Relative Autonomy

Miliband's *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969) draws on the basic Marxist assumption outlined above that the state is an instrument for the ruling class to maintain and exert their domination. It served to counter and critique the prevailing wisdom of bourgeois liberal theories of the state which considered it to be a politically and ideologically neutral institution in politics and had been derided by pluralist authors such as Dahl (1965) and Easton (1953) as irrelevant to the study of politics. Considering that the major works of Gramsci had yet to be made available in English, the book marked a significant and ground-breaking move forward in the development of a Marxist theory of

the state.⁶⁸ In addition, despite the fact Miliband had limited awareness of Gramsci's concept of hegemony, a significant part of the book addresses the process of legitimisation and consensualisation through the agencies of what Gramsci recognised as civil society (Miliband 1969: 179-264). "Obscured though it may be, the fact remains that the mass media in advanced capitalist societies are mainly intended to perform a highly 'functional' role; they too are both an expression of a system of domination, as a means of reinforcing it" (1969: 221). In addition to the mass media, Miliband also identifies other civil society institutions as party to the ideological processes carried through the state such as education, the church and commercial and industrial organisations.

Early criticisms came from Poulantzas (1969) who attacked Miliband's approach for accepting the liberal pluralist terms of the debate and failing to recognise what Poulantzas regards as the objective structural reality of the state and social classes. For Poulantzas, and other Althusserian Marxists, Miliband's invocation of pluralist elites incorporates and instrumentalist, agency centred approach which may vitiate against the specified aims of the critique by accepting the epistemological assumptions of bourgeois social science. Instead, according to Poulantzas, the focus of study should be the state itself. This results in an overly structuralist account in which social agents are considered as merely passive 'bearers' of objective structures which they are largely incapable of influencing.

In many ways, the Miliband Poulantzas debate generated more heat than light. Despite the somewhat rancorous nature of these early debates, both writers over time came to adopt more dialectical approaches to the study of the relations between the state and dominant classes and their respective merits have been developed by subsequent writers in interesting and valuable ways. To the extent that any resolution might be found, the previous discussion of the strategic

⁶⁸ Miliband makes an early concession to the importance of Gramsci based on the only two works published in English at that time

relational approach to the structure agency problematic corresponds to the relations of class and state discussed here. Indeed, that approach was developed by Jessop, largely from his reading of the later work of Poulantzas, in particular his most valuable book *State, Power, Socialism* (1977), which defined the state as a more complex and contingent social relation than his earlier formulations. This shift was largely a result of his engagement with the work of Foucault and the implications of the knowledge/power nexus in practices of governmentality. I discuss the work of Foucault in more detail in the following chapter on discourse. For now I want to retain a focus upon the changing political form of the state and in particular, Poulantzas' earlier notion of relative autonomy, to which Miliband eventually came to concede some ground (1977: 74). According to this theory of relative autonomy,

the state is not subject to direct and immediate control by the capitalist class, but that it has a degree of autonomy from such control. This insight makes clear that not all state actions can be explained as responses to the interests of particular fractions of the capitalist class, but rather many actions can be understood as flowing from the state's function as the 'factor of cohesion' in the social formation. Yet in fulfilling these functions, the state is acting in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole-hence the autonomy of the state is relative and limited. (Block 1980: 228)

This reading of the function of the state is useful and pertinent for understanding the institutions of GEG which arrange and regulate the political and economic processes we associate with globalisation. The relationship between governing elites and these political forms is not a simple one but the connection is complex and contingent and central to understanding the possibilities for alternative politics at the global level and within local and regional polities.

Conclusion

While the above debates may now seem rather dated and arbitrary, I suggest they have been useful in order to pave the way and to stimulate new perspectives on state transformation and the emerging institutions of globality. In comparison to Marxist theories of imperialism and world systems analysis, I argue that theories of the state have been much overlooked in the IR/IPE literature. However, I suggest that if we acknowledge that the state is not a static object but an evolutionary, shifting, contingent form, then Marxist theories of the state can be deployed to help us understand the complex relational interplay of ideology, class and state.

If politics and governance, albeit without formal government, is evolving at the supra-state level as suggested by much of the literature, then it should be at least considered that something resembling a global state is apparent. That being the case then, some account of its historical emergence and political character is called for. This must entail a consideration of the role of ideas and ideology in relation to the material and structural transformations that we can trace in recent history. In so doing, we must identify an agent or agents which have established those ideas. In short what follows seeks to identify a transnational capitalist class which disseminates a neoliberal ideology through which it attempts to legitimise a particular regime of accumulation and system of exploitation. I argue that a discourse historical methodology is the most effective means by which to carry out such an interpretive analysis of the role of ideology in contemporary political and institutional transformation.

Ch. 6 Discourse as Theory and Method

Introduction

In this chapter I continue the theme of hegemony initiated in the previous chapter on Ideology, elaborating the role of discourse within and upon hegemonic and counter-hegemonic practices. It will further address some of the theoretical questions raised in the earlier discussions of structure and agency and in turn contribute to that debate (without making any claims to resolve it). This chapter continues to develop the theoretical and historical context necessary for the empirical analysis of neoliberal discourse in the final chapter. It discusses some of the key problems and criticisms associated with some discursive and post-structuralist perspectives. While acknowledging some of these criticisms, I suggest ways in which discourse theory and method can be effective tools for analysing the emergent, dynamic and shifting political institutions and identities involved in the struggles around globalisation, democracy and neoliberal capitalism. Furthermore, I propose that such analysis can itself contribute to, identify with, and in the process become an aspect of that critical movement seeking more democratic alternatives to the current hegemony. As such, the chapter asks how discursive dissent can be imbued with the capacity to exert counter-hegemonic human agency. Such a claim emphasises a disavowal of claims to objectivity in favour of an explicitly situated analysis which seeks to empower marginalized groups engaged in 'anti-capitalism', 'alter-globalisation' and radical democratic projects.

Chapter 4 attempted to trace the evolving analysis role of culture and ideology within politics and the hegemonic project of capitalism through the work of Marx and subsequent Marxist writers, in particular, Antonio Gramsci. I continue this line of theory (with Gramsci as a key connection) by demonstrating the continuities between the concept of discourse, which I will show can also reveal important cultural aspects of late capitalism, and the older and currently less fashionable one of

ideology. I suggest that while sharing some characteristics with ideology (particularly the Foucauldian notion of 'orders of discourse'), the way in which the concept of discourse has been developed, refined and deployed provides a set of theoretical and methodological tools effective for the understanding of the struggles over global governance between an existing neoliberal hegemony and a potential/emergent radical democratic counter-hegemony.

The contemporary global socio-historical juncture begins in the crisis laden 1970's and became consolidated in the 1980s climate of 'endisms' in what appeared to be the decline of socialism and any plausible alternatives to capitalism and (neo)liberal 'democracy' (Fukuyama 1991). As I have already suggested and will further argue below, there is some evidence for this 'crisis' period marking a fundamental punctuation in history. Nevertheless, crucial as these events still seem, the continuities should appear at least as remarkable as the changes. In hindsight, the end of the Soviet Union and its sponsorship of state socialism in other parts of the world increasingly appears in hindsight to have been an obvious historical outcome of the snowballing processes of neoliberal capitalist expansion (see Cox's concept of Global perestroika in *Socialist Register* 1992); the 'end of empire' appears now to be more of a change in form than in substance.

In the grand scheme of things it is perhaps the scientific and technological discoveries of this period that mark the most significant transformations and the socio-economic cultural and political changes described have come largely but by no means solely as a result of these. Many commentators recognise that the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism was bolstered by new developments in information technology that were used to justify privatization, deregulation, streamlining and downsizing of organizations across the world (Chase-Dunn and Gills, 2003). The novelty, character and cultural emphasis of late capitalism is highlighted by Castells:

Cultural battles are the power battles of the Information Age. They are primarily fought in and by the media, but the media are not the power holders. Power, as the capacity to impose behaviour, lies in the networks of information exchange and symbol manipulation, which relate social actors, institutions and cultural movements, through icons, spokespersons and intellectual amplifiers. [...] It is, however, a different kind of capitalism than that formed during the industrial revolution, or the one that emerged from the 1930s depression and world war two, under the form of economic Keynesianism and social welfarism. It is a hardened form of capitalism in its goals, but is incomparably more flexible than any of its predecessors in its means. (1998:368 and 374)

The realms of knowledge and meaning have been utterly transformed by these unprecedented developments in new communications media. Such developments are comparable to the invention of the printing press or perhaps even the emergence of the written word itself in terms of their impact on social relations. Indeed, there has undoubtedly been a global technological revolution of sorts and in communications especially, and one which has vast political implications as recognised by Gill:

There are new technologies of organised violence, extended surveillance and incarceration (disciplinary power) and, on the other hand, new forms of global political innovation and collective action have nevertheless emerged to begin to pose alternatives to disciplinary neo-liberalism (often by using the very same technologies of global communication for organisational and persuasive purposes). (2003: 153)

I attempt to explore some of the potential implications of these changes for understanding contemporary forms of political struggle and the current chapter maps out a concept of critical discourse theory and method which, I argue, is well suited to such a task. The chapter also picks up from themes introduced earlier where I suggested that structure and agency debates were

unhelpful to an exploration of hegemony and resistance and that drawing on some critical and strategic-relational insights and in particular the concept of discourse enables a necessary decentring of structures that attempt to fix meanings and identities in the interests of the powerful. The combined purpose of the chapter then is to show how discourse theory emerged from the debates discussed in the previous chapter and to demonstrate how a concept of discourse is both theoretically and methodologically appropriate for an analysis of neoliberal hegemony and the possibilities for a democratic counter-hegemony.

Clearly then, this thesis is dealing with two additional, yet I argue related, questions – questions which I suggest concepts of discourse and methods of discourse analysis may provide some tentative answers and further avenues for political action and research. One is the ontological and epistemological question of dualities, in particular the grand structure/agency debates and their Marxist variants of base and superstructure etcetera. I suggest that a discursive approach, while in no way solving these questions, provides an alternative way of looking at social and political conflict and change that attempts to avoid such dualities. In relation to the contemporary historical juncture however, a more pressing methodological question arises and provides a context for this study. The changing nature of capitalism, relations of production, modes of commodification, and the emerging forms of transversal politics deeply implicated in these changes have left many traditional tools of analysis and theoretical perspectives wanting. Discourse analysis and its sensitivity to language, text, symbols, cultural production and the third dimension of power so intrinsic to hegemonic struggles, is part of a tradition of thought which has largely emerged to specifically understand and respond to these changes. The transversal and cultural nature of late capitalism and new forms of global resistance demands a scholarly approach which is equally sceptical toward any notions of fixed spatial boundaries and disciplinary limitations.

I begin here then, by briefly suggesting why the emergence of 'late' capitalism since the 1970s has demanded a renewed attention to the power/culture/economy nexus in the disciplines of IR/IPE. I suggest that attention to language, and more specifically, critical discourse analysis, provides a set of tools that bring into focus aspects of these legitimising strategies and political struggles which other methods sometimes fail to reveal. The 'linguistic turn' which provides the theoretical stimulus for much of this chapter must be seen as occurring within, and representing a substantial part of, what can be regarded as a broader 'cultural turn' that has characterised a significant tradition of, and sometimes opposition to, left/social(ist)/Marxist criticism. As discussed in chapter 4, that tradition stretches from aspects of the work of Marx and Engels through Lukacs and Gramsci, and elements of the Frankfurt school. In other words, what has come to be known as 'western Marxism' and also in the various guises and occasionally baffling extremes of post-Marxism, post-structuralism and postmodernism.

This chapter develops that with a brief argument for further attention and broader understanding to 'new' media and communications technology, and the transformation of cultural, informational and knowledge production and consumption in analyses emergent in a context of neoliberal capitalist hegemony. The argument prioritises knowledge and ideology as a crucial aspect of hegemony, attending to the ways in which certain schemas of knowledge become hegemonised and how opportunities and tactics for effective counter-hegemony might be revealed by such discursively informed and oriented critiques. In short, it attempts to provide a rough theoretical account and methodological map which should also indicate many further avenues for analysis of the myriad discursive spaces where the fissures of power and opportunities for counter-hegemonic praxis are exposed.

Discourse, culture and the knowledge economy

The focus, in chapter 4, on culture and ideology as elements increasingly pertinent and even historically central to hegemonic struggles in the 19th and 20th centuries, continues in the contemporary context, where culture assumes new relevance in a late capitalist 'knowledge economy' and cultural processes and artefacts become increasingly central to economic growth in late capitalism as commodities in themselves. It provides a historical backdrop for the case that a discourse-historical approach can reveal the changing political nature of the production of culture and illustrating its importance for the process of reification in constructing and maintaining neoliberal hegemony.

The trans-disciplinary and critical roots of discourse analysis (and perhaps post-structuralism more generally) draws, strongly but by no means exclusively, from cultural studies, literary criticism and the radical critique of capitalism carried over from structuralism in the form of 'western' or post-Marxism.⁶⁹ This variously left leaning, critical theoretical heritage presents an explicitly political reading of cultural forms and practices and recognition of how they act as vital sources of resistance and forms of dissent. As noted by Martin Shaw "In periods of transition, the strongest early intimations of change appear in culture—before politics or economics—but these are also the least clear indicators of the eventual shape of the new order" (2000: 6). A focus on discourse provides greater flexibility than the more fixed approaches which might be associated with an 'ideological lens' and some of the marxist baggage associated with that approach. However, there are many intellectual debts owed to the older tradition of ideology critique.

⁶⁹ See in particular J. Culler's introduction in *Framing the Sign* (1988) which suggests Althusser's work on 'structural causality' opened the way for Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* which marked a key turning point in Marxist literary criticism and the political implications of literature and text more generally. On this see also *Marx, Althusser, Jameson: An Introduction to the Political Unconscious*.

Many counter-capitalist movements and their discourses demonstrate an acute awareness of the importance of culture and many advocate and pursue culturally based forms of protest, in traditional forms of carnival and street-theatrical protest, through more modern media such as film, photography and to more 'post-modern' forms such as culture-jamming and subvertising. Discursive analysis of these forms of self-representation and communication reveal aspects of their being, their collective subjectivities and their historical potential, which are closed to, or simply ignored by, other tools of analysis. Discourse analysis then, is particularly relevant to this kind of study, not just for its receptiveness to a richer understanding of new forms and representations of capitalism and the dynamics of globalisation, but also the transversal dissident responses to them and the questions of power and resistance which frame these struggles. As I will attempt to show here, the concepts of culture and ideology and their role in hegemonic struggles discussed in the previous chapter are deeply implicated in, and helpful for the understanding of, the history and development of discourse theoretical approaches.

As Castells argues, the late twentieth century witnessed the beginning of a discernible shift in the nature of capitalism, one that appears to be on-going. Not just its transition from an international to a global economy but a move toward an informational or knowledge based economy as distinct from one based predominantly around the manufacture of material products.

This new economy emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century because the information technology provided the indispensable, material basis for its creation. It is the historical linkage between the knowledge information base of the economy, its global reach, its network based organisational form and the information technology revolution that has given birth to a new distinctive economic system. (Castells 2000:77)

Indeed, this process has been largely facilitated by the multiplication of the sources⁷⁰ of knowledge, primarily through the expansion of mass communications media. The extraordinary extent to which these new forms of interaction and information dissemination have proliferated has far reaching implications for questions of democracy, power and global governance. As Nigel Thrift suggests:

As knowledge has been 'mediatized' through new communications technologies which play a critical role in the disposition of objects, information and persons, becoming part of a sea of signs, so the rights to knowledge have become crucial since increasingly it is the co-constructive interaction between knowledge and the media which defines property. (2000: 73)

Thrift is drawing heavily on the insights of Michel Foucault in his persuasive argument for the need to examine new practices and networks of knowledge which constitute new formations of power above and beyond the nation state. The function of these discursive networks of knowledge is to create new cultural systems of expertise (ibid.: 73). Thrift further suggests that a vital element of this 'soft power' of late capitalism expresses itself primarily through a 'Euro-American' discourse of managerialism⁷¹ which appears to have strengthened the hand of a core of capitalist states and increased the salience of discursive power in a context of cultural globalisation. Such highly influential 'cultural circuits of capitalism' illustrate the everyday workings of Foucault's concept of Governmentality (see below and also Dean 1999; Burchell, Gordon and Miller eds. 1991).

⁷⁰ If we take the internet for example, some of the fastest growing non-commercial uses of this media is the development of weblogs (Blogs) and wikipedia. These texts, in wikipedia's example, an encyclopaedic body of knowledge which is the product of tens of thousands of contributions and changes and 'corrections' to other entries. Here 'balanced' knowledge is supposedly 'democratised' at least to the extent limited by the fact that those with the most time, resources and access etc have the most discursive opportunity and thus carry more weight interestingly reflects the other myriad power structures which order and re-order the various productions of knowledge. Despite these concerns, wikipedia appears to somewhat transgress the divide between subjective and objective knowledge.

⁷¹ For a thorough discussion of the relationship between new managerialism and capitalist globalisation see Martin Parker's *Against Management* (2002).

Perhaps the key contribution of Michel Foucault to our understanding of 'late' (or as Thrift refers to it as 'soft') capitalism, has been the examination of this fundamental relationship between knowledge and power, understood both in terms of the power of knowledge and the knowledge of power. This intimate relation, at least for this study, becomes ever more important for the interpretation and understanding of capitalism with the advance of what has been called the knowledge economy. A knowledge economy constitutes forms of production and services based on knowledge-intensive activities and which in turn contribute to a faster rate of technical and scientific advance and rapid obsolescence. Contemporary cultural forms such as music and fashion exemplify this rapid obsolescence where quality and sustainability are secondary to short term capital extraction. These sectors are now almost exclusively and unquestioningly referred to as 'industries' in their own right and no state government with an eye to its comparative advantage can afford to ignore this shift in emphasis. An example is the marketing of 'Cool Britannia' by the UK New Labour government, exporting UK cultural capital within a discourse of branding the nation as young, affluent, creative – all that is desired and rewarded in 'knowledge capitalism' and thus feeding into and drawing on a range of other discourses which constitute those overarching discourses of 'dynamism', 'progress' and 'growth' that underpin neoliberalism.

One of the key aspects of the shift to globalised post-fordist techniques of production has been the tendency for multinational corporations to hive off or 'outsource' their manufacturing to smaller 'flexible labour' operations and export processing zones in the periphery and semi-periphery where states seeking inward investment set up export processing zones⁷² while the production in the core nations concentrates upon the manufacture of signs, labels, branding, and other intangible constructions of meaning which add value and kudos to the material garments and products.

⁷² See International Labour Organisation, Bureau of Library and Information Services Resource guide on Export Processing Zones.

Central to this kind of economy then is an increased reliance on intellectual capabilities and inputs instead of physical skills or natural resources. As a result, 'value is placed increasingly upon cultural artefacts *and the knowledge which renders them valuable*' (Powell, W and Snellman, K. 2004: 199, my emphasis). Clearly, the present capitalist system employs a range of discourses to shape our tastes and notions of value. This is important as it rejects what appears to be the common sense notion that we put meaning on things, and suggests instead that the objects around us and our relationship to them constitute us as subjects, partly constructing our consciousness.

This change in the nature of capitalist production toward more cultural artefacts not only relates to the consciousness of consumers who 'value' them but also the nature of the work and workers which produce them. In addition it can be seen as directly related to the changing nature of class discussed earlier (see also Kees van der Pijl, 1984 and 1989) and described by Hardt and Negri:

In the final decades of the twentieth century, industrial labour lost its hegemony and in its stead emerged "immaterial labour," that is, labour that produces immaterial products such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship or an emotional response. (2004:108)

This tendency towards a widespread commodification of more intimate, and often culturally specific, forms of human activity is illustrated by the increasingly familiar references to the knowledge worker and the knowledge economy in everyday parlance. According to Graham, this terminology "presumes forms of labour, which can be bought and sold in order to produce commodified artefacts of conscious experience, or knowledge commodities" (2002: 228). A process of technological objectification alienates these 'commodified artefacts' of knowledge from the conscious human activity which is their source.

This intertwining of the cultural and economic forms of domination and homogenisation associated with late capitalism can be seen as a defining and central economic aspect of contemporary neoliberal hegemony and the new forms and practices of alienation which it constitutes. Furthermore, these transformations in the content and form of capitalism have an obvious effect on the nature of resistance to it. Trades unions in the SIACS, traditionally formed around manufacturing labour and the supply of finite material resources, no longer carry the same political force they had in the Fordist era of production as they are geographically and spatially removed from the new productive and manufacturing core of the economic system. On the profound implications of this transformative process of knowledge commodification and its significance for counter-hegemonic strategies of resistance, Frederic Jameson has argued that:

Commodity production is now a cultural phenomenon, in which you buy the product fully as much for its image as for its immediate use. An entire industry has come into being to design commodities' images and to strategise their sale: advertising has become a fundamental mediation between culture and economics and it is surely to be numbered among the myriad forms of aesthetic production. (2000:53)

The important relationship between culture, knowledge production and power/resistance, suggests that an analysis of discourse presents not only a valid supplementary or alternative methodology, but one which may have important advantages that enable it to engage more effectively with central aspects of global or 'late' capitalism. Within, and in a sense constituting, the broader processes of socio-economic re-scaling and re-structuring, late capitalism is reliant on new and instantaneous communication and media technologies and the increasing brand/logo awareness of corporations and consumers. These elements combine to create new and more

powerful forms of advertising and marketing which themselves not only serve to sell products and services but also, perhaps more importantly, further embed the neoliberal globalist discourse underpinning the establishment of a global market society (Hooper 2001). As people come to identify with certain brands and logos which are imbued with meaning through discourses of marketing and advertising it becomes increasingly difficult for them to challenge or even see beyond the current system to alternatives in which democracy is more substantially practiced. Consumer 'democracy' supplants more substantive forms of politics through discourses of 'choice' that resonate linguistically in people's minds to notions of freedom and thus reifying individualist rational choice assumptions as simple 'facts of life'. Indeed, in this sense advertising discourse and the practice of branding are perhaps the key lynchpins of late capitalism as it compels the increasing levels of consumption required for its renewal and survival. This compulsion to 'grow' and for 'more', is granted widespread consent of the subjective construction of citizens as consumers in their inculcation into corporate discourses, absorbing repeating and disseminating them as popular culture and conventional wisdom (eg. 'Just do it'; 'because I'm worth it'; 'we're lovin' it'; 'the futures bright...')

A slightly different but equally interesting example would be the global ad campaign of HSBC which uses cultural differences and particularities as a means of selling a universal corporate culture (Best and Paterson 2010). As Rao puts it: 'the "keeping in place" of difference but the simultaneous marking of a universal' (1996 n.p.). These discourses demand some critical scrutiny in order that we begin to recognise and understand how they are doing more than merely selling a product, they are also shaping the knowledge that people have about themselves and the world, their very consciousness and the institutions which they value. Attention to such practices and performances must therefore be key to understanding the nature of late capitalism, its reification of individualism, homogeneity, consumption and greed. Such attention also highlights the major challenges facing

progressive social and political movements engaged in counter-hegemonic counter-capitalist praxis. An understanding of such discursive and productive power is fundamental to their project.

Corporate discursive power

Doris Fuchs has argued that the growing power of global corporations in the contemporary context of globalisation is largely and increasingly discursive in nature. In addition to traditional schemas of instrumental and structural power, Fuchs suggests that the discursive element in corporate/business power has led to its increased legitimacy to speak and act on political issues. Within broader debates on global governance in which actors such as TNCs, global institutional and regional frameworks (WTO, IMF World Bank, EU, OECD) and NGO's of various persuasions are assumed to have growing influence over policy in relation to individual states, the main source of this legitimacy, according to Fuchs (2005) has been:

the increasing emphasis on efficiency, competitiveness and growth in the last three decades of the twentieth century. This has turned business into the politico-economic expert; the primary actor considered able to provide and guarantee the provision of desired goods. Due to its possession of [and unrivalled access to] superior information and expertise, in combination with the view that complex and fast changing technological and economic environments require decentralised governance and flexibility in reaction. (778)

These 'discourses of globalisation' are a central focus of this study and are closely in line with the discursive readings of globalisation such as those provided by Nigel Thrift (above briefly) and Ian Douglas (1996).

The availability of resources to those groups and individuals articulating this kind of discourse also skews this discursive power in favour of corporations. Access to the global visual media of television and film for example is evermore tilted in favour of the dominance of late capitalism. Even if the resources were available, mainstream networks are rarely open to disseminating messages which question and critique the very basis of their own corporate 'freedom'. The example of Adbusters' attempts to purchase airtime in order to screen an advert for Buy Nothing Day met with a refusal by most TV companies in the US to provide airtime, even at the market rate. Often states legislate against the airing of overtly 'political' messages, leaving the inherently and subliminally political message of all advertising to go largely unchallenged. Where space is legally available, networks are unlikely to air paid-for anti-corporate messages as their main sponsors will likely react negatively, withdrawing their own campaigns from networks which do not show complete corporate solidarity.⁷³

Largely as a consequence of these ongoing processes of restructuring and re-scaling in the global economy, the political struggles which flare up in the spaces of alienation, marginalisation, silencing and disappropriation no longer occur at the factory gates but in forms and spaces that are more highly mediated and discursive. This is mirrored somewhat by contemporary examples of technologized military conflict where the operators of remote 'state of the art' weapons are often far removed from the field of battle and the key conflict for the western 'alliances' in wars such as Yugoslavia and Iraq becomes the media war. Casualties are measured in 'public opinion'. Indeed, 'one of the lessons the US Pentagon took from Vietnam was that the power of television meant that control of the military's message was central to the success of their operation' (Campbell,

⁷³ See www.adbusters.org for examples of 'subvertising' and culture jamming in North America. Kalle Lasn's (1999) 'Culture Jam' provides an account of his own frustrated attempts to buy air time on Canadian and USW TV networks p29-35.

2003:59). The 'winning of hearts and minds' (for which we could supplant knowledge and consciousness) requires not the free flow of information but its tight control and regulation.

Similarly, in the struggles over capitalism and democracy, the weapon is also increasingly the word. While in one sense the technologies of surveillance, coercion and control have shifted the balance in favour of the dominant minority, they have also been harnessed in the counter hegemonic ranks of democratic resistance. The battle between public and private cyberspace has seen a proliferation of political movements shift much of their message to the digital medium of the internet. The educational, organisational and lobbying capacity of this space has probably yet to reach its full potential. Yet, consider for example the way in which the indigenous and localised resistance of the EZLN (Zapatistas) overcame the overbearing military might of the Mexican state by harnessing the internet to publicise their struggle and plight forging connections with wider grassroots democratic and anti-capitalist movements.⁷⁴ Without this medium their message of largely non-violent (but lightly armed) insurrection would not have been possible.

Approaches incorporating discourse analysis in its variety of forms therefore appear to be an especially pertinent and revealing method of studying and understanding these important elements of political struggle the global political economy and world politics in general. Before proceeding to carry out such an analysis I will provide a more detailed account of the concept of discourse and its historical emergence within broader theoretical debates on the left.

⁷⁴ For a detailed analysis of the Zapatista Movement see the various works of Adam David Morton 'Mexico, Neoliberal Restructuring and the EZLN : A neo-Gramscian Analysis', in Barry K. Gills (Ed.) *Globalisation and the Politics of Resistance* . London: Macmillan, 2000, pp. 255-79. and "'La Resurrección del Maíz': Globalisation, Resistance and the Zapatistas', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* , 31:1 (2002): pp. 27-54.

From ideology to discourse

The bold assertion by V.N. Voloshinov in his *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, that “without signs there is no ideology” (1929:9) marks an early recognition among Marxist and other left intellectuals of the connections between language, knowledge (consciousness) and relations of power. While Gramsci can be shown to have implied the importance of language in his cultural reading of hegemony and ideology, it is really the lesser known Voloshinov who first makes this connection explicit within what might be called Marxist thought. While these texts remained unpublished and largely unknown outside of Russia until the 1970s, the dominant perspective on language and society seems to have been shaped most strongly by the structuralism of Saussurrean linguistics. In this model, which forms the early basis of linguistics and a little later sociolinguistics, language is conceived as system of signs where the meaning of any one element in the system is derived from its opposition to other elements. For Saussure, words and images work as signs within language systems where the sign comprises two elements, the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the actual form (word or image) itself which ‘points to’ the signified which is the corresponding concept in our consciousness.

Saussure further distinguished between *langue* and *parole* in human language. *Parole* consists, according to Saussure, of the acts of speaking and writing which are made possible and intelligible by an agreed structure or ‘system of forms’ (Culler, 1976:29), the *langue*. Saussure believed that the *langue* was the important social aspect of language and could be studied, due to its fixed structure, scientifically. Lacking such structure, *parole* on the other hand represented the infinite surface utterances and speech acts through which language is practiced. Despite the flaws in Saussure’s theory such as his lack of attention to change in language structures and the operation of power in language, his approach was a key challenge to the assumption that the subject is the

originator of language and meaning. Saussure showed that the codes and meanings of a language already exist in society and its shared cultural understandings.

Saussure's model then, is key to the emergence of what has become known as structuralism and influenced a range of scholarship undertaken under the structuralist banner across a range of disciplines. This has been largely due to the fact that "[t]he closed structured character of language at the level of its rules and laws, which, according to Saussure, enabled it to be studied scientifically, was combined with the capacity to be free and unpredictably creative in our actual speech acts" (Hall 1997, 33-34). As such it led a number of key theorists in other areas to develop his scientific approach to the broader study of culture and society (e.g. Levi Strauss). It is therefore perhaps not so much Saussure's narrow linguistic methodology but his more general view of language as being first and foremost social that is of most importance to an account of the roots of discourse theory and method.

Importantly though, the system of signs for Saussure is decontextualised and therefore abstracted from the concrete lived experience of society, in a sense then it is a 'closed system'. As such it was a theory of language that largely ignored the infusions of power in language use and the way in which communication is itself partly constitutive of perceived 'reality'. This intertwining of (linguistic) structures and (communicative) actions in a kind of dialectic would have been familiar ground to those Marxists still puzzling over the contradictions of base and superstructure, culture, hegemony and the facilitation of revolutionary consciousness. It is perhaps not surprising then that the linguistic turn and subsequent discourse-based approaches evolved through debates largely within the structuralism of the theoretical left and have as a result more or less consistently contained a critical political element of some description.

As a convenient but not completely arbitrary starting point for that tradition, Volosinov's presentation of a Marxist inflected and thus inherently political analysis of language is remarkable. It is an analysis that accounts for its social context and is embedded within those struggles, contradictions and ambiguities of everyday life. In contrast to the Saussurean approach, Bakhtin and Volosinov argued that language should not be regarded and studied as a closed abstract system (the *langue*) but as it is practiced in its material everyday reality (*parole*). The Marxist background and framework, particularly in the works attributed to Volosinov, render their reading of language as essentially social and rooted within the historical struggles between different social groups (or classes).

In this way, Voloshinov provides us with an early outline for what Eagleton recognises as a 'materialist theory of Ideology which does not simply reduce it to a reflex of the economic 'base' but grants the materiality of the word and the discursive contexts in which it is caught up, their proper due". (1991:195) These insights are remarkable in that they were developed decades before similar ideas emerged in what has come to be known as 'western Marxism' and the broader debates in post-structuralism.

The (re)discovery of these works proved highly influential and it is perhaps fair to say that Voloshinov represents 'the father of Discourse Analysis' (Eagleton, 1991: 195) as it is variously practiced today. I will elaborate further on my own methodology for a critical discourse analysis (CDA) later in this chapter with more detailed and concrete examples in the next chapter. Before doing so I want to lay out in some more detail the theoretical developments which have influenced and are still sometimes confusingly associated with that particular method of analysis and which have drawn on the work of Saussure and Volosinov among many others. This is not the only route through which it is possible to trace the emergence of discourse as a theory and method in the

social sciences but attempts to highlight the left/critical and structural/post-structural tradition with which it is imbued and in which this work loosely situates itself.

Pecheaux

One of the more recent key developments in Marxist analyses incorporating a linguistic or discursive element is associated with Michel Pecheux in particular his *Language, Semantics and Ideology* (1975[1982]). As a follower of Althusser, Pecheux's contribution was to attempt to overcome the criticisms of the Althusserian model made by Hirst (1979: 64-8) among others. Pecheux drew upon Althusser's assertion that ideology comprised not just disembodied thought and ideas, but occurs also in material forms. He attempted to do this through a combination of Saussure's structural linguistics with insights developed in the field of psychoanalysis based in particular on the work of Freud and Lacan. Rejecting Althusser's theory of subjectivity that was largely restricted to instances of recognition and misrecognition in the processes of interpellation, Pecheux's work can be seen as a welcome attempt to overcome some of the tension in Althusser's still rather deterministic theory of the subject. Borrowing some of his key terminology from Foucault, Pecheux introduced the central notion of 'discursive formations' into what otherwise remained a largely Althusserian framework. Nevertheless, his identification of discourse as an important material element of ideology and thus hegemony has been influential in a number of subsequent theoretical and methodological strands including critical linguistics and social semiotics. Discursive formations, in Pecheux's view, consist of "that which in a given ideological formation [...] determines what can and should be said" (1982:111 original emphasis).

This kind of focus upon the narrative forms and linguistic procedures moves the analysis on to a new dimension of a Marxian theory of ideology, one which attends more to the material context of

social interaction and struggle than simply to the role of ideas and consciousness. However, according to Howarth, Pecheux's effort to go beyond the structural determinism of Althusser's account of ideology and his development of methodological tools for a discursive social and political analysis do not release him sufficiently from the straitjacket of structural Marxism. "His [Pecheux's] approach remains entrapped within Saussure's privileging of langue as a static and unconscious system of linguistic differences, and this militates against a historical and contingent conception of meaning and signification" (Howarth 2000:97). Perhaps the key development for the concept of discourse over ideology then is a recognition that language is not merely the means or vehicle by which hegemony is achieved, it is itself a location of political struggle and counter-hegemony, "discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle" (Foucault in Mills p.43).

Whereas critics of ideology illustrate the domination of one group over another through mechanisms of false consciousness (or in Althusser's terminology misrecognition) in the process of interpellation, theories of discourse provide broader avenues for resisting and re-shaping these processes and structures. While theories of ideology place some emphasis on the overthrow or subversion of repressive power relations, they are problematic when trying to account for this agency at a theoretical level. The revolutionary subject lies at the heart of many such analyses but it is sometimes difficult to understand how subjects overcome the 'false consciousness' in which ideology immerses them. Social transformation is itself considered to be embedded in the structural contradictions of capitalist relations of production. Discourse theory provides a means of understanding and revealing forms of hegemony that does not assume that subjects are purely passive victims of systems of thought (Mills 1997:30). However, while Marxist perspectives of

history and progress lay out explicit goals of 'Utopia'⁷⁵, political practice informed by discursive approaches tends to produce less teleological and more complex, indeterminate and contingent visions of the future. This is in part due to the similar lack of attention afforded to agency within some discourse theoretical approaches. Indeed, as a result of this lack of attention to agency, many have argued that discourse theory, like some accounts of ideology, prevents an articulation of agency as humans are engulfed so deeply in discursive webs that they are unable to escape them. This largely depends on how one conceives of discourse. Discourse is not simply another term for ideology but, as 'a particular set of effects within ideology' (Eagleton 1991: 194). It does not replace the concept of ideology but permits a method of interpretation and revelation. It can also respond to the call to restore the agency of strategic subject to political analysis (Hay 2001).

Discourse then, refers not only to the dominant structures of meaning (akin to notions of ideology) but also, and in particular for methods of discourse analysis, to the myriad and interconnected subjective discursive practices which variously construct, maintain, challenge and resist those meanings (see Hall on Foucault in Potter, weatherall) This focus on practice and its play within permeable and contingent structures of meaning reinstates a role for agency within discourse theory.

Discourse and agency

In political theory, particularly its cultural left variant, the question of agency is perhaps one of the most crucial questions of our time. The theoretical 'advances' of the 20th century, discussed briefly in this and the previous chapters, appear to have stranded many on the political left, leaving them

⁷⁵ Thomas More's use of the term referred more to a vision of something that he probably believed could not be achieved in reality. "It is a world of dreams, a world beyond existence" (see: <http://www.online-literature.com/more/utopia/>) The term "utopia" is in all probability combined from 2 Greek words - "not" (ou) and "place" (topos), thus meaning "nowhere". More cleverly created the word "utopia" to suggest two Greek neologisms simultaneously: outopia (no place) and eutopia (good place). In this original context, the word carried few of the modern connotations associated with it.

in need of new foundations to build a political project. These foundations have often been found in the personal realm of identity politics where 'the personal is the political' (Klein 2000). A reluctance and widespread suspicion (verging sometimes on embarrassment) with broader political aims and movements of a collective nature also resonates with a common resignation to the dominant system displayed in common parlance phrases like 'you can't buck the market'. The hesitancy of critical perspectives to lay out definite goals for society and concrete programmes for social change is matched with a popular depoliticisation where it is assumed that there is no alternative to the system. This hesitancy on the part of social theorists and political philosophers comes understandably with the lessons of twentieth century history in which some of the best intentions have brought some wretched consequences and western/global 'civilisation' to its brink. The discursivity of ideological structures, revealed by a close critical focus on textual practices, renders structures of domination more vulnerable to alteration but falls short of any utopianism. We may be reminded of Gramsci's famous dictum regarding a pessimism of the intellect combined with an optimism of the will.

So, with the provisos of extreme caution, consistent reflection and self-critique, political agency in the form of radical democratic social movements can progress despite the essential recognition that power cannot be eliminated from social relations and political practice, or indeed any form of communication or signification. Such movements must in this sense be open to agonistic models of democracy in which conflict is assumed to be an inherent element of the democratic process. Progressive politics then entails the construction of institutions that allow or even require these conflicts to play out at the discursive level and limits the possibility for forms of domination either through direct physical force or more structural forms of violence. Agency is about the freedom and ability for subjects to construct and voice alternative discourses which contest and potentially undermine existing orders of discourse.

Roland Bleiker suggests that this “alleged inability to speak of agency is largely a reflection of anti-postmodern polemic, rather than a position that is inherent to or advocated by most authors that have sought to apply a discursive approach to the study of social and political phenomena” (2003:26). I will return to issues of agency again in more detail in the final chapter (6) in relation to concepts of agonistic democracy and the challenge of Foucault’s critics to these ends in particular will be addressed in this chapter below.

In this brief section I have attempted to show how developments in the Marxist theory of ideology have led toward some convergence with post-structuralism and critical concepts of discourse have emerged therein. They have created a theoretical space which, despite some considerable limitations, has maintained its critical, political and perhaps even emancipatory assumptions that now reside within much contemporary discourse theory and method. This convergence occurs most fully in the work of Laclau and Mouffe whose theory of discourse, drawing on Foucault, Derrida and Lacan, rejects much of the Marxist theory of ideology and ultimate determinacy. I will return to the work of Laclau and Mouffe following a more general account of the concept of discourse within poststructuralism and more specifically the work of Michel Foucault and the contributions brought to the debate by his theorising of power.

Discourse theory: beyond structuralism?

Perhaps partly for some of the reasons outlined at the beginning of this chapter, recent years have seen the concept of discourse play an increasingly significant role in the social sciences. Its theoretical perspectives and methods of analysis are deployed across an expanding set of disciplines by a growing number of scholars. I suggest this is more than simply an intellectual fashion but a response to the increasingly textual and immaterial social universe that we inhabit.

Unsurprisingly then, among these scholars, a wide and proliferating range of definitions has been applied to the term. Some, narrowly defined, concentrate upon single utterances or speech acts, others such as Derrida associate the concept with the entire social system and regard discourse as literally constituting the social and political world. While others such as Foucault apply the term in a variety of ways:

Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word discourse, I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualized group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements. (Foucault 1972, cited in Mills 1997:6)

Amid this relative confusion, this section will begin to clarify my own use of the term for the purpose of the subsequent analysis. As the title of this chapter suggests, a significant part of the problem in this area stems from the fact that discourse refers to both a theory and a method in the social sciences. Before proceeding to outline some methodological aspects of discourse, I want to discuss its more recent theoretical development in some detail and so as to explain further why such a methodological approach is warranted.

In a sense both following and diverging somewhat from Foucault, I retain and elaborate briefly upon the 'macro' notion of 'orders of discourse' and 'discursive formations' in which the term is used to describe an overarching structure that attempts to fix meanings and representations according to dominant interests. In short, the meta-discourses which engender and maintain neoliberal hegemony at the macro level. In addition however, I undertake a slightly more systematic approach which scrutinises some of the micro discourses which are both shaped by and constitutive of the overarching orders of discourse. This position is consonant with (and influenced by) much of

Foucault's work on domination and power which also presses this point. I return to questions of power in the work of Foucault in more detail below (and how his insights have been developed and somewhat re-worked by Laclau and Mouffe). Before doing so, and in line with the broader analysis of Gramscian moves from structural Marxism to the more discursively oriented and post-structural approaches of Laclau and Mouffe, I want to discuss how the development of post-structuralism evolved more broadly from structuralist social theory and philosophy.

Structuralism and Post-structuralism

Most, if perhaps not all, of these discursive approaches owe something to the general move from structuralism toward post-structuralism within western philosophy and critical social theory. Going back a little further, the language games of the later Wittgenstein should also be seen as important and influential. However, there remains considerable debate and disagreement regarding what actually represents a post-structuralist position or mode of thought. It would perhaps be more accurate to refer to it as a range of positions or schools of thought. What does seem to be a common thread running through these perspectives though, is some form of response to, or reformulation of, structuralist thought. Indeed, some scholars even prefer the term neo-structuralism tending to de-emphasise the difference/separation between their work and structuralists such as Levi Strauss and Saussure for example and furthermore to acknowledge the intellectual debts owed to these influential thinkers (Peters 2001).

Perhaps the common theme, which draws these neo- and post-structuralist thinkers together, is a concern with textuality and the important and complex relationship to which I have alluded already between language, knowledge and power. These developments have come to be referred to by some as the 'linguistic turn' in social science and they have emerged in a period really since the late 1960s and early 70s. Such a turn entails a shift in stance that rejects, in David Campbell's words an

“epistemic realism, whereby the world comprises material objects whose existence is independent of ideas and beliefs about them” in favour of “a logic of interpretation that acknowledges the improbability of cataloguing, calculating and specifying ‘real causes’, concerning itself instead with considering the manifest political consequences of adopting one mode of representation over another” (1993: 7-8).

If however, one were to identify a distinct theoretical break from structuralist linguistics then some mention should be made of Jaques Derrida’s critique of Ferdinand de Saussure’s linguistic structuralism. The important question of just how and where meaning resided in language was the key issue in this initial post-structuralist move embodied in Derrida’s *Writing and Difference* (1967). In this seminal text, Derrida sought to remedy the deficiencies (discussed above) he saw in Saussure’s work, characterised narrowly by his emphasis on speech as opposed to writing and a broader critique of language and society as closed or fixed systems. However, the political salience of Derrida’s work is drawn into question by a number of writers, including Foucault and others associated with the post-structural movement. His assertion that “there are nothing but signs... nothing outside the text... [and that] the thing itself is a sign” (1976: 49-50), might give us reason to wonder what space for political agency and radical democratic projects exists in the light of such assertions.

Notwithstanding these claims, others have perceived important political implications in the work of Derrida and his ideas have been undeniably influential for the development of discourse theory and method across a range of disciplines. His concept of deconstruction, outlined briefly below, has been particularly useful for methods of discourse analysis. In another related vein, Howarth notes that “Derrida’s conceptual infrastructures and logics, when articulated with concepts and logics gleaned from thinkers such as Marx, Heidegger and Foucault are vitally important for

analysing all types of social and political discourse” (2000: 47). I have attempted to show already how concepts of discourse emerged largely from the critical tradition initiated by Marx. Foucault is perhaps the only figure of equal significance and his own valuable contributions are discussed in the following section of this chapter. In particular, Derrida’s ideas have influenced the explicitly political and post-Marxist analyses of Laclau and Mouffe, to whom I shall turn briefly at the end of the chapter.

The importance of language and textually as *relational*, which post-structuralism draws from the structural linguistics of Saussure, distinguishes it from other approaches that share a concern with the social construction of meaning. Alexander Wendt, for example, comes near to a discursive approach as he defines social structures as “shared knowledge, material resources and practices”(1995: 73). However, as we have seen, many thin constructivists such as Wendt remain receptive to a positivist epistemology, acknowledging the relevance of causal analyses and scientific principles. There is a sense in these works that social science should seek to mirror the explanatory potential of the natural sciences. Indeed, Onuf maintains that “constructivists need not repudiate positivism just because it is liable to criticism” (1997:8). Such criticism comes largely from post-structuralists who are generally sceptical of all forms of positivist knowledge. Flyvbjerg (2001)⁷⁶ provides an interesting discussion of this theme in his *Making Social Science Matter* in which he abandons the quest for an explanatory social science in favour of a Phronetic one which is based in the Aristotelian notion of practical wisdom and follows from four key questions which should guide social research: Where are we going? Is this development desirable? Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power? What, if anything, should we do about it? The point is that critical scholarship and research can proceed effectively without a denial of foundations. I do not

⁷⁶ See also Noel 1999 and Sanford and Caterino 2006.

suggest that interpreting texts is the only way to accurately gain understanding of the world but one among many possible critical alternatives

The distinctive way then, in which discourse theory is distinguishable from much social constructivism, is that emphasis is placed upon the relationship in which things are located in a system of signs and more importantly, the way in which these relations distinguish one object from another within that sign system. This line of thinking perhaps represents a key insight of structuralist thought drawn from disciplines as diverse as linguistics, anthropology, psychoanalysis and literary criticism. Indeed, it is the relational aspect that represents structuralism's most important contribution to social inquiry in general and the development of discourse analysis in particular as a method in the social sciences. Words, objects, events ideas and activities have no meaning in themselves—they only make sense in relation to other words, objects, events ideas and activities. To illustrate the point, Saussure (1974) gives the example of the word 'man' which he suggests can have no meaning except in relation to other words such as woman, boy or animal. While these ideas draw heavily upon the work of Saussure, they have been developed and refined, primarily through Derrida's (1981) philosophy, to highlight the way in which relationships are structured largely in terms of 'binary oppositions' e.g. rational/irrational, modern/primitive, educated/ignorant. Derrida's key insight then was the hierarchy of signs where the valorisation of one end of the opposition works to vilify and denigrate the supposedly opposing term. In this way it is possible to recognise the workings of power within our systems of language and communication. The notion of social and cultural construction still holds but can be shown to operate at a more fundamental discursive level.

Derrida introduced a strategy for undermining the inherent hierarchy of these oppositions known as deconstruction.

In a traditional philosophical opposition we have not a peaceful coexistence of facing terms but a violent hierarchy. One of the terms dominates the other (axiologically, logically), occupies the commanding position. To deconstruct the opposition is above all, at a particular moment, to reverse the hierarchy. (Positions 56-57/41,cited in Culler 1982: 85)

An approach to processes of neoliberal globalisation and resistive agency, which draws on the insights of post-structuralism, must therefore incorporate an attempt to identify and deconstruct such binary oppositions within the discourses of neoliberal governance and political economy. It is worth remembering that such oppositions are not restricted to neoliberal conceptions of political economy but also characterise many Marxist notions of base/superstructure in which the political and cultural processes are merely contingent upon and hence subordinated to the particular form of economic production. A key aim of post-structuralism and in particular the post-Marxism of Laclau and Mouffe is to deconstruct this deterministic account of political economy. This commonality between two otherwise diametrically opposed worldviews displays their shared heritage in Enlightenment thought and subsequent moves in western philosophy and social theory. It highlights the extent to which the debates over globalisation, neoliberalism, and social justice reflect the predominantly western episteme within which all these struggles play out. Derrida's legacy therefore bears heavily upon any approach to the social sciences which addresses the (re)construction of meaning and representations of 'truth' through an analysis of language or, more broadly, discourse. The shift to a broader definition of discourse as something more than just linguistic signification was also a key element in the work of Michel Foucault who, as we have seen, has been hugely influential in the development of discourse theory and method, particularly in relation to power, knowledge and the subject.

Foucault and Power

In many respects the work of Michel Foucault spans the rickety theoretical bridge between Marxist inflected theories of ideology and later post-structuralist positions which have been largely responsible for the further development of the concept of discourse in the social sciences. It is possible to regard much of Foucault's contributions as a response to, and dialogue with, the term 'ideology' and Marxism more generally. For Foucault, discourse offered a more nuanced concept than ideology, in which he found three key 'difficulties':

The first is that, whether one wants it to be or not, it is always in virtual opposition to something like the truth... The second inconvenience is that it refers, necessarily I believe, to something like a subject. Thirdly, ideology is in a secondary position in relation to something which must function as the infrastructure or economic material determinant for it. (Foucault 1979: 36)

Foucault is widely associated with post-structuralist and post-modern thought, yet some commentators have identified a strong structuralist remnant in his early works such as *The Order of Things* and *The Archeology of Knowledge*. Foucault however later distanced himself from what he regarded as the formalism of structuralist thinking but was equally unhappy with the postmodernist label. It is perhaps his genealogical works in which he developed his concept of power more fully that began to display a greater distance from some of his earlier more structuralist assumptions.

The overarching contribution that Foucault made to political thought has been to highlight the ways in which historical conditions and configurations of power influence the ways in which knowledge is produced and thus the way in which society classifies, thinks, values, discriminates, makes judgements. Like many continental (especially French) post-structuralist philosophers, much of his

work can be seen at least partly as a response to the failure of Marxist analyses to sufficiently account for the continued survival of capitalism following what appeared to many to be its impending decline in the late 1960's and early 70's. His work is therefore important to this study at a number of levels. Foucault was directly involved in the anti-capitalist student protests in France in 1968⁷⁷ and his work has therefore developed (and duly altered course) in the historical light of late capitalism (what some would call the postmodern era). Foucault was conscious of the effects of that historical context on his ideas and work, indeed, such effects were a central concern for much of his research. Despite numerous claims to the contrary, his work represents a politically important critique of capitalism due perhaps chiefly to his insights into the workings and insinuations of power. These are revealing not just for a clearer understanding of late capitalism, but also useful as ideas for counter-hegemonic practice; in Foucault's words 'as a spanner or a screwdriver to short circuit, discredit or smash systems of power, including those from which my books emerged [...] so much the better' (quoted in Mills 1997:17) He thus suggests an approach to the study of power relations that is:

more empirical, more directly related to our present situation, and which implies more relations between theory and practice. It consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists of using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application and methods used. Rather than analysing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analysing power relations through the antagonism of strategies. (1986: 211)

⁷⁷ Much of the recent literature on 'anti-capitalism' has emerged from 'anti-globalisation' and as such locates the movement historically as emerging in the 1990's. A number of commentators and activists however stress a longer lineage. The 1968 protests in Paris were part of a broader international resistance which linked protests in the US (civil rights) Mexico and elsewhere. In France the involvement of the PCF and trade unions in mass strikes gave it a particular anti-capitalist slant. see the 1968 declaration of the PCF Secretary General Waldeck-Rochet at: <http://www.Marxists.org/history/france/may-1968/lhumanite-05-25.htm>.

Foucault's critical approach to modernity led many to label him postmodern or even anti modern and nihilist, but this would be a mistake. He regarded himself as neither and resisted attempts of others to classify him and his intellectual endeavours. He famously demanded: "Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same. More than one person, doubtless like me, writes in order to have no face." (Foucault, What is an Author, cited in Butler 2005:111). Much of his work, as I will attempt to show, demonstrates a commitment to democratic ideals of freedom (admittedly somewhat removed from the liberal limitations of parliamentary and representative forms) and the clear influence of key democratic thinkers of the enlightenment, Kant, Marx and Nietzsche.

The Foucault/Habermas debate: discourse, democracy and power

While the German social theorist Jurgen Habermas is rarely, if at all, considered in the canon of discourse theorists, he did produce a highly influential account of discourse ethics which are considered to be a robust critique of Foucault from within the critical tradition. As a result his work is of considerable relevance for this thesis. His work has been widely compared and contrasted to that of Foucault and other postmodernists/poststructuralists (see Peters, 2001 p.55-6, Kelly, 1994 and Flyvberg, 2001).

This is an important debate as there exist within progressive movements for democracy and justice deep divisions as to the understanding, usefulness and validity of universal concepts of democracy and human rights. The Foucault/Habermas debate speaks to many of the real divisions and fissures between and within neoliberalism and alter-globalism. Indeed, what might be termed the 'human rights movement' in its formal UN centred sense, is itself in some dilemma as to the reconciliation of indigenous and minority rights with traditional liberal democratic civic principles. The arguments of Habermas and Foucault map roughly onto one reading of global political struggles as liberal

enlightenment values of human rights and progress (Habermas) running up against the more particularist relativisms of communitarian sometimes conservative and often national politics.⁷⁸

In a similar way the disagreements between Habermas and Foucault reflect rather closely the theoretical bases of each side of what might be termed the schism of the contemporary left. The apparent irreconcilability of these positions reflects one of the key challenges for alter-globalist movements, the divisions and disagreements between reform and revolt. These can often in turn reflect similar fissures between those who pursue 'direct action' politics, including damage to property, and elements which take a more dialogical route of 'pressure politics' (in places equally difficult and dangerous and often more so). This spiky/fluffy debate assumes greater significance for political activists in light of the 'Global War on Terror' where any such 'active' opposition to the current order is increasingly met with the full force of the state.⁷⁹ These conflicting discourses will be discussed in more detail later but will be somewhat clearer in the light of a summary of the often contrasted Habermasian and Foucauldian approaches. Furthermore, I suggest Habermas' formulations reveal many reasons why the work of Foucault is so important to the study of contemporary global struggles.

Habermas' analyses and practical suggestions provide early intimations of the kinds of debates circling in the current progressive/radical democratic, counter-capitalist and alter-globalist networks and his status provided important impetus and theoretical foundations for such networks and their goals, to become the objects of widespread social scientific analysis (eg. Della Porta and Diani 2006; Doerr, 2007). Habermas' ideas apply to a broad spectrum of issues and of particular interest to this study are his earlier suggestion that New Social Movements, as supposed

⁷⁸ indeed, Habermas once referred to Foucault as a young conservative, see Fraser (1985).

⁷⁹ Although Bondaroff (2008) notes that such external threats such as religious terrorism may have led state security agencies to pay relatively less attention to domestic 'ecotage' since 9/11.

practitioners of a 'communicative rationality' attempting to enact an 'ideal speech situation', might represent the best hope for models of a radical pluralist democracy and represent key agents in the reclamation of the public sphere from the encroachment of the capitalist system upon the 'lifeworld'. This tension between public and private spheres identified early on by Habermas has been influential in the framing of globalisation resistance debates of recent years.⁸⁰ These claims will be discussed in more detail in the last chapter on social movements and anti-capitalist/alter-globalist networks. For this chapter I want to focus more specifically, if briefly, on Habermas' use of the term discourse, primarily to demonstrate why the work of Michel Foucault is so important to the claims of this thesis.

Despite their rather different understandings of the term, both Foucault and Habermas both regarded the concept of discourse as central to understanding the democratic project, however, the way in which they conceive these terms, and their respective understanding of the relationship between them is markedly different. Habermas developed a more empowering notion of discourse in which democracy is underpinned by universal human reason which connotes, in the form of an ultimate communicative rationality, "a non-coercively unifying, consensus building force of a discourse in which participants overcome their at first subjectively biased views in favour of a rationally motivated agreement" (Habermas 1987:315).

Largely due to his assertion that new social movements might be the bearers of new forms of democracy, Habermas' work has attracted much attention and interest in recent political theory. His work has often been explicitly geared toward political investigations, specifically around

⁸⁰ Naomi Klein, perhaps one of the most publicly known commentators on these issues frames the problem in very much this way, suggesting that in opposition to rampant privatisation of everything "people are reclaiming bits of nature and culture and saying 'this is going to be public space'" NLR 9, May-June 2001: 82. Much of Habermas' project is oriented to this goal of reclaiming a public or common sphere for democratic dialogue.

democracy and changes in the public sphere. More recently his own work has taken a linguistic turn most famously in his *Theory of Communicative Action*. As a result one might expect his work to be as relevant to the study of anti-corporate and counter-capitalist movements as that of Foucault. As Gemma Edwards suggests “The existence of the anti-corporate Movement has once again unleashed Habermas’ potential for analytic insight into the realms of contemporary social theorising” (2004: 127) However, I suggest that Habermas attention to power (or rather the lack of it) limits his analysis in a number of ways which a Foucauldian approach can improve upon.

As a young member of the Frankfurt School, Habermas sought to rescue the enlightenment project from the death which Adorno and Horkheimer had proclaimed for it.⁸¹ The post-war German context of his writing unsurprisingly influenced Habermas and other members of the Frankfurt School in a number of ways. Like his colleagues, Habermas was understandably sceptical about the supposed promises of modernity but regarded the enlightenment ideals and the emancipatory project contained therein too important to be dismissed. His theory of communicative rationality argued that social conflicts could be resolved through what he termed an ideal speech situation. This argument has been influential in the ideals and philosophy underlying the recent construction of social forums as spaces to challenge the neoliberal forums such as Davos and G8 etcetera.

Habermas’ ‘discourse ethics’ elaborates five necessary conditions or requirements which must be met to ensure an ideal communication situation: Firstly, the requirement of generality. All parties affected by the debate should have equal opportunity to be involved in the discourse. Second,

⁸¹ *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, written in the 1940s and first published in 1947, showed how Enlightenment norms had turned into their opposite, how democracy had produced fascism, reason had produced unreason, as instrumental rationality created military machines and death camps, and the culture industries were transforming culture from an instrument of *Bildung* and enlightenment into an instrument of manipulation and domination’ (see Foucault’s *Subject and power* and the discussion in Kellner 1989, Chapter 4). Quoted from *Habermas, the Public Sphere, and Democracy: A Critical Intervention* by Kellner www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/habermas.htm accessed 16/6/05.

autonomy; the process of discourse must allow all participants equal opportunities to have their arguments' claims to validity presented and evaluated. Thirdly, ideal role taking demands that participants must be willing and able to empathise with the validity claims of all involved in the debate. Fourth, the eradication of power differentials among those participating in the discourse such that the arrival at consensus is not affected by these inequalities and finally fifth, the intentions and goals of those involved must be made explicit so as to discourage strategic action by participants. In short then we can summarise the above as generality, autonomy, ideal role taking, power neutrality and transparency are required to provide the ideal speech situation in which democratic decision-making finds its full realisation (Dahlberg 2005). Flyvberg rather cynically adds to these the sixth possible requirement of "unlimited time" (2001: 91). While some commentators have pointed toward the European and World Social Forums as close to enacting at least some version of Habermas' ideal. Others have asserted that Habermas' work provides a model around which the forums could be organised (Wenman 2008; Doerr in Teune 2010).

It is perhaps with the last two of these that Habermas' conceptualisation of power can be shown to be lacking and thus problematic for Habermas' commendable project of realising more substantive and participatory forms of democracy. In this work, power is the pink elephant sitting in the corner of the room about which Habermas refuses to comment, despite his earlier criticisms of Gadamer for overlooking power in his discussions of dialogue.⁸² It would be incorrect to suggest that considerations of power are entirely absent from Habermas work but in this particular strand of his philosophy he appears to assume that its effects can somehow be eradicated. He is not sufficiently clear however on just how this might be achieved.

⁸² See: http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory/jurgen_habermas.html.

This insufficient attention to, or misunderstanding of power, by Habermas in processes of discourse and dialogue is challenged by Foucault whose contributions to the theorisation of power have been little short of revolutionary and spawned a great deal of controversy and criticism. Foucault's own recognition of the problem gives a clue as to the nature of some of these criticisms when he asks:

Do we need a theory of power? Since a theory assumes a prior objectification, it cannot be asserted as a basis for analytical work. But this analytical work cannot proceed without an ongoing conceptualization. And this conceptualization implies critical thought – a constant checking. (Foucault 1986: 209)

Despite this often overlooked commitment to democracy and refusal to be 'blackmailed' by the enlightenment ideals Foucault rejects the unquestioning faith in human rationality. This does not represent anything like a synthesis as such, the basic premises of these respective 'giants' remain starkly at odds. Indeed, summing up what appears to be the crux of this debate and in rather stark opposition to Habermasian optimism, Foucault declares that:

Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law [the writing of constitutions] finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination (In Rabinow 1991: 85 [brackets added]).

Nevertheless, it is possible for elements of each to inform the current analysis. Foucault authorised such an option in his invitation that his works be seen as a toolkit from which to draw and pursue new lines of inquiry. At the same time, the very breadth and scope of Habermas' contributions reveal a range of theoretical elements which might be deployed in any number of ways.

Drawing heavily upon and further pursuing this line of thought for the contemporary climate of multiculturalism and 'international terrorism', further critique of Habermas comes from more recent work by Mouffe who also stresses the impossibility of eradicating conflict from human social relations and rejects Habermas' assertion that 'liberal' democracy, underpinned by the rule of law, represents the most effective model for a global democratic project. (Mouffe and agonistic politics⁸³)

While this thesis does not represent a strictly Foucauldian analysis (if indeed such a thing can exist), the work of Foucault has been influential in a number of ways and his contribution to the development of discourse theory has been huge. Without doubt, many of the arguments in this work would have met with Foucault's disapproval (not least perhaps the more systematic textually oriented discourse analysis demonstrated in later Chapters). The introduction to this thesis made explicit my departure from some post-structuralist positions which limit the possibility for emancipatory projects while adopting some of the more nuanced conceptions of power developed in or at least influenced by that theoretical tradition. Foucault is no exception; his work has often been criticized for foreclosing any prospects for radical democracy. It is Foucault, perhaps beyond any other theorist of the late 20th century, who has applied the concept of discourse in such close relation to that of power. It is this contribution which I seek to discuss in what follows.

As I have suggested, the shift from structuralism to post-structuralism and the assumed distinctions between them are a little blurred. In a similar fashion, while Foucault's work is sometimes discussed as a shift from a largely structuralist position to a post-structural and post-modern direction, such a shift is debatable. This supposed theoretical development has been the source of

⁸³ Mouffe deploys Wittgensteinian insights to question the problematic universalising tendencies of Habermas' claims that liberal democracy holds the possibility for emancipatory politics (see: <http://them.polylog.org/2/amc-en.htm>)

much discussion among Foucauldian scholars and beyond. While it is not my intention to rehearse these debates in any detail here, the unnecessary controversy over the extent of the change relates to the view that the distinction between structuralism and poststructuralism is often overstated and undeniably contentious. Foucault himself commented upon the criticisms of his changing stance replying that he should have worked for all these years merely to say the same thing?

It is perhaps best to begin by showing how Foucault extended the concepts of language and semiosis to consider discourse as a *system* of representation. Moving away from the structuralism of Barthes and Saussure and hinting at the inherently political and conflictual nature of discourse Foucault asserted that the:

point of reference should not be to the great model of language (langue) and signs, but to that of war and battle. The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power are not relations of meaning. (1980: 114)

This concern with the conflictual nature of discourse, echoing somewhat the earlier insights of Volosinov, betrays a remnant of Marxism in Foucault's thought. However, moving beyond Hegelian Marxism of Althusser and the semiotics of Barthes and Saussure, he argued:

Neither the Dialectic, as logic of contradictions, nor semiotics, as the structure of communication, can account for the intrinsic intelligibility of conflicts. 'Dialectic' is a way of evading the always open and hazardous reality of conflict by reducing it to a Hegelian Skeleton, and 'semiology' is a way of avoiding its violent bloody and lethal character by reducing it to the calm Platonic form of language and dialogue. (1980: 114-115)

The key point in the work of Foucault then, which distinguishes it from the earlier semiology of Saussure and Barthes, was the move from studying language, to a conception of discourse as a system of representation where power and thus conflict are a central feature. Discourse had been previously understood as a purely linguistic concept, meaning passages of connected writing or speech. Foucault's contribution expanded the concept of discourse to incorporate the overarching rules and practices that give meaning to statements and regulate discourse in particular historical periods. According to Hall (1992:291) the new meaning which Foucault attributed to discourse in which it referred to a collection of statements that provide a common language through which historically situated subjects attribute meaning to objects of knowledge. The term refers to those combined statements which serve as a language for discussing a particular topic during a specified historical juncture.

In short then, much of the empirical analysis in what follows in the next chapters will attempt to show how the hegemony of a dominant neoliberal historic bloc is maintained and potentially challenged by discursive practices and formations. Foucault's genealogical work is relevant as it helps understand how those specific discourses emerged and as such may provide some indication of how they may be effectively challenged and altered. As such, in sharp contrast to the claim that Foucault's work forecloses possibilities for articulating resistance and creating alternatives, I suggest that it serves to highlight the workings of power (which without an inherent understanding of resistance would be completely meaningless) in such a way as to expose new opportunities for transformation.

I have alluded already to the variety of ways in which Foucault employed the term discourse. In his early writings he pioneered the concept in what have come to be known as his 'archaeological' writings. In these Foucault advanced a notion of discourse as constituting or constructing society

along various dimensions. For instance, social relationships, identities and shared cultural understandings (or common sense in Gramsci's terms), a realm of intersubjectivity.

The meaning of objects, the knowledge people have about them does not exist independently of references to them. They are constructed, maintained and transformed in discourse according to the rules of a particular discursive formation. Using the example of madness, and how its meaning was constructed within the discourse of psychopathology since the nineteenth century, Foucault argued that 'mental illness was constituted by all that was said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it...' (1972:32) However, in defining a discursive formation we need to take account of the fact that objects of knowledge are not fixed or stable. They are subject to transformation, either within a particular discursive formation or between one formation and another.

Clearly then, the concept of discourse is closely linked to forms and applications of knowledge and this relationship requires some further discussion. It might be useful to begin with some consideration of what is meant by 'knowledge'. I refer here in the main to what I call cultural knowledge as distinct from personal or group knowledge. Personal knowledge is that which represents the sum of our daily experiences such as conversations, news reports. Group knowledge is that shared by distinct social groups eg corporations, social movements, scientists. According to van Dijk, such knowledge 'may be biased and ideological and not be recognised as 'knowledge' by other groups at all, but be characterised as mere 'belief'. Indeed, knowledge is regarded in its broadest sense here as more than simply recognition but something more akin to notions of consciousness discussed in the previous chapter

CDA: Theory and Methodology

Among the variety of sub-fields which can be said to operate with a concept of discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has come to align itself with an explicit political agenda. This above all marks it out as a distinct approach within the field of discourse. The nature of the problems which CDA is concerned is different in principle from those methods which do not determine their interest in advance. Indeed, "the line drawn between social scientific research, which ought to be intelligible, and political argumentation is sometimes crossed [...] since it endeavours to make explicit power relationships which are frequently hidden, and thereby to derive results which are of practical relevance" (Meyer in Wodak and Meyer 2001: 15).

CDA refers to field of research which emerged as Critical Linguistics (CL) at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s and associated primarily with the work of Fowler, Kress etcetera and drew substantially on the work of Halliday and Frankfurt school (critical theory). The emerging field of CDA has a number of elements that distinguish it as a distinct approach to the social sciences. Based largely around the journal entitled 'Discourse and Society' and evoking a strong interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary focus, CDA directs its research toward empowering marginalized groups and subaltern subjects. It can therefore be said to have a strong political focus and recognition of the interrelationship between political commitments and research interests. The methods invariably involve an investigation into the ways in which certain discursive representations come to dominate within a particular field of practice.

In contrast to some other fields of discourse analysis, CDA regards texts alone as insufficient objects of enquiry. For the analysis to be critical, attention must be paid to describing and theorizing the social processes and historical structures through which texts are produced as well as those within which actors create meanings in their interaction with texts (Wodak in Wodak and Meyer 2001:3)

As such, the concepts of power, history and ideology must be central to any CDA as they are to any critical enquiry. CDA is unlike more traditional forms of sociolinguistics, and conversation analysis which are seen by many critical linguists as conceiving of language as an autonomous system, insufficiently correlated to the variables of social context. Such simple and often deterministic accounts of the relationship between texts and the social are largely avoided by CDA.

Despite the range of methodologies pursued within this perspective in terms of the kinds of text analysed, how they are gathered, Critical discourse scholars agree that texts must be closely and consistently related to the social context or 'order of discourse' as such, the research 'oscillates between a focus on structure and a focus on action' (Fairclough in Wodak and Meyer, 2001:124). The following quote from van Dijk clearly illustrates this distinction and commitment:

Instead of focusing on purely academic or theoretical problems, it starts from prevailing social problems, and thereby chooses the perspective of those who suffer most, and critically analyses those in power, those who are responsible, and those who have the means and the opportunity to solve such problems. (1986: 4)

The key points of CDA can be summarized as follows:

- Language and other semiotic forms are seen as a social practice.
- Theory and method are explicitly related but a range of theoretical and methodological approaches are pursued
- All discourses are historical and can therefore only be understood in reference to their social context.

- A focus on concepts of intertextuality—the way in which discourses draw upon and influence each other.
- A critical approach—research plays a practical advocatory role for the marginalized and disempowered.

We can see how these necessary criteria for discourse analysis method owe a great deal to the theoretical insights of a long tradition of critical thought which has engaged with language as a site of political struggle *and* social analysis. Before proceeding further however it is necessary to return briefly to the key problem which this thesis attempts to address.

While concepts of ideology and discourse are not the same thing they are so intimately related that there has been a temptation to simply switch from discussions of one to the other in the vain hope we can dispense with the difficulties of the former. Indeed, CDA inherits much of the difficult and contentious baggage that comes with the analysis of ideology and arranges it in accordance with a normative and critical commitment to emancipation for the multitude (thereby encompassing the social, cultural, gender, racial); A commitment to the continuing and a primary focus on the power relations and implications which are crystallised in myriad forms of discursive representation and thus the inherent contingency of knowledge and truth claims

The discourse and historical analysis carried out in the following chapter seeks to address and further explore the democratic deficit inherent within emerging forms of global governance where allocation of resources is increasingly determined by a global market mechanism and so-called democratic states cede decision-making procedures to less accountable technocratic institutions. These new neoliberalised institutions of governance (corporations, IGO's NGO's and the combined

efforts of governments of the wealthy SIACS (eg. G8, OECD), are significantly constituted by ideas and discourses that represent the interests of a transnational power bloc or ruling class.

An interrogation of the discourses underpinning this historical process can reveal the ways in which changes in forms of governance, often referred to in terms of 'globalisation', are represented as irresistible through various discourses of freedom, necessity, rationality, progress. In addition, the way in which these discourses construct popular understandings (common sense) of the global justice movement(s) particularly in terms of so-called 'anti-globalisation'. I examine the discourses of late capitalism and in particular the way in which resistance and alternative worldviews are represented and de-legitimized..

Discourse analysis, applied in this critical fashion, can be used to reveal various mechanisms by which a dominant or ruling class is able to maintain its hegemony and marginalize subordinate groups and movements. Such an approach highlights the way in which certain dominant discourses act as systems of signification which help construct social realities and identities of political actors. The underlying assumption here is that things or objects (in the case below, resistive agents, but equally nation-states, corporations, NGO's, the environment or the market) have no intrinsic or a priori meaning or significance of their own. Their meaning, significance and purpose derive entirely from what is said and thought about them, their representation within discourses. These sign systems are predominantly but not exclusively linguistic. Discourses also allude to the full semiotic range of representational media including photographs, film, animation, advertising etcetera.

Perhaps most importantly and on the wider terrain of social theory more generally, critical discourse analysis can provide an empirical account of the relationship between structure and agency. It is therefore well equipped to discuss and better understand some of the larger 'macro'

issues and processes e.g. globalization and social transformation, by examining the 'micro' political practices and discourses of both dominant and subaltern groups. It provides a lens which draws sharply into focus the many ways in which discourse and communicative action are shot through with multiple relations power which at first we may not comprehend or even notice. An understanding of the concept of hegemony and the contributions of critical constructivism including the insights of Michel Foucault on the concept of power, help us to identify and critique the workings of power within the struggles over contested forms of democracy and the possibilities for a post-liberal democracy. The following chapter will proceed to a more systematic and detailed analysis of these discursive contestations.

Chapter 7. Neoliberalism: from normative to normalized discourse⁸⁴

[T]he novelty of the present situation stands out in historical view. It can be put like this. For the first time since the Reformation, there are no longer any significant oppositions – that is, systematic rival outlooks – within the thought-world of the West; and scarcely any on a world scale either, if we discount religious doctrines as largely inoperative archaisms, as the experiences of Poland or Iran indicate we may. Whatever limitations persist to its practice, neo-liberalism as a set of principles rules undivided across the globe: the most successful ideology in world history. (Anderson 2000: 43)

Introduction

As laid out in the introduction to this thesis and indicated in the chapters so far, this study seeks to explore certain aspects of transnational socio-economic, cultural and political change through an understanding of historical and ideological shifts in the dominant forms and representations of political economy during the second half of the 20th century. It is concerned in particular with the role of ideas and discourse in these transformations and attempts to draw lessons from the establishment of a neoliberal world order by way of an examination of neoliberal ideas and how these came to shape and dominate the institutions of the contemporary global political economy, both its core capitalist states (SIACS) and the organisations and institutions of global governance constructed by elite groups/classes within and across those states. It does so in order to demonstrate the importance of ideas and discursive strategies of legitimization and justification for socio-economic changes. I argue that a crucial lesson to be drawn from the neoliberal ascendancy

⁸⁴ I borrow the terms 'normative and normalized in this context from Hay's (2004) article which develops a similar and more rigorous scheme from which I draw here but hope to complement that work with a critical analysis of neoliberal discourse.

is the recognition that the popular consciousness or common sense of the general public can be seen to be alterable, so as to accept a set of principles which previously had been prone to deep suspicion and open and widespread derision. In one sense then, it may be regarded as a large scale historical experiment in the Gramscian theory of hegemony, a struggle for new forms of consciousness and consent in a war of position against a dominant social-liberal consensus. Despite the spurious claim to separate economics and politics in most liberal theory, many neoliberals had an unrivalled understanding of how these realms of thought and practice intertwine, along with elements of philosophy, history, psychology etcetera, in humans' general understanding of their world and their relations with it. Importantly though, as we shall see, they also had substantial material resources at their disposal in the form of private economic power and vested commercial and industrial interests.

Some examination of how such neoliberal propositions became not only acceptable but swiftly assumed the apparent status of being themselves beyond dispute would seem cogent at the current historical juncture of yet another global crisis of capitalism, where many commentators now question the efficacy and sustainability of a political economic system that such ideas draw into being. Not simply the stark inequalities which follow from the release of market forces on a global scale (Chossudovsky 1997; Wade 2007), the ecological crisis entailed by untrammelled growth and the celebration of conspicuous consumption (George 2004: 29-52), but also the political malaise and democratic deficit which seems to follow from the perceived exigency for states to respond through a very narrow and restrictive set of policy measures (Hay 2004; Pauly 1997; Falk 2001; Moravcsik 2004).

This chapter will commence with a description of neoliberalism and the features which distinguish it from the broader liberal tradition from which it emerged. It will consider the role of an expanding transnational capitalist class as a key factor in that emergence and discuss the key historical and

institutional transformations, both domestic (largely with respect to the US and UK) and international. The second part of the chapter will present a case study of *The Economist* which will serve as an example of how neoliberal discourse has become largely normalised and processes and institutions of financial liberalisation and deregulation.

Part one considers the historical emergence of neoliberal ideas during the latter half of the twentieth century as a normative project and consists of two elements. Firstly it outlines a genealogy of neoliberal ideas and their relationship to parallel intellectual currents in the course of the second half of the twentieth century. Secondly, it discusses how these ideas relate to the material processes and policies which surfaced to reshape the global political economy from the 1970's. It draws upon neo-Gramscian conceptions of hegemony and class power in that it is not simply a state of pure ideological domination as such, but a continuous struggle for power in which all social groups participate, albeit on largely unequal terms. In doing so, it will maintain the focus on the importance of the production and dissemination of ideas in the political struggles surrounding the development of neoliberal globalisation. Hegemony, as Stuart Hall puts it, "is always contested, always trying to secure itself, always 'in process'" (1988: 7). This work will extend the research of both neo-Gramscian thought and critical constructivist discourse analysis by blending their insights into an examination of a theme which is central to both their research agendas. How powerful groups and elites develop, maintain and entrench their combined ideological and material power.

Part one – A Historical/ideational analysis: Neoliberalism as a normative project

As I have already discussed, the profound changes that have swept world politics over recent decades, beginning with the demise of the Bretton Woods system and the economic crises of the

early 1970s and compounded by subsequent technological and geopolitical developments, have had a dramatic and in many ways detrimental effect upon the hard-won democratic advances made over the previous two centuries and particularly since the end of World War Two. During the twentieth century, the social-liberal democratic states which emerged in various forms and degrees across Western Europe and the Americas, have been the locus for some of the most profound and progressive democratic accomplishments, many extending the project of emancipation beyond the individually based civil and political rights and into the more socially rooted rights of economic justice. In the core of the world system, public healthcare, free education and systems of social security all emerged in some guise and to some extent in these variously social-liberal democracies during the so-called golden era of capitalism.

Internationally, systems of direct colonial rule fell away in much of Africa and Asia (at least until the Cold War proxy conflicts turned many of these fledgling democracies against themselves and each other). The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and the widespread ratification of its subsequent covenants, combined with the wider normative power of the democratic project and human rights discourse more generally, eventually helped to dislodge even the most persistent of totalitarian regimes such as those in South Africa and the USSR.⁸⁵ The fact that these democratic achievements and advances have been achieved within a 'capitalist' economic framework is widely deployed as an argument that capitalism is a fundamental framework for freedom and that liberal democracy represents the so-called 'End of History' (Fukuyama 1989, 1991). This has become a central assumption and fundamental normative and ideological pillar of neoliberalism, that free markets create free people(s).

⁸⁵ Although by the time these fell, the neoliberal ideology was already in the ascendant and thus played its own role in the changes which took place (see Chossudovsky, (1997) *The Globalisation Of Poverty: Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms*. London: Zed Books.) part five of this book is devoted to an analysis of the 'neoliberalisation' of the former Soviet Union and the dire consequences which were a result of that experiment in economic 'shock therapy'.

However, a wide range of scholars and commentators from various perspectives, even sometimes from a broad liberal academic tradition, have made persuasive claims that these accomplishments were founded upon an international system of fixed exchange rates and regulation of global finance and have since been dangerously undermined by the expansion and entrenchment of a deregulated global market economy brought about by a handful of neoliberal states and other actors (Gill 2003; Casanova 1996; Overbeek and van der Pijl 1993; Held 1995; Held and McGrew 2002; Falk 1999; Brecher, Costello and Smith 2000; Sernau 2000). A perhaps more contentious argument is outlined below, that this process also involves (even requires) the establishment of complex systems of governance and policy networks which help entrench the ideological dominance and political interests of a global ruling elite or 'class'n (Robinson 2004; Sklair 2001; van der Pijl 1998). The combination and consolidation of this neoliberal elite and the ideological apparatus that surrounds and extends from it represents a 'historic bloc' in the Gramscian sense. This argument will be developed through a historical, genealogical and, in part two, discursive analysis of neoliberalism.

In the grand scheme of human history, the period since the Second World War is of course a relatively short one. Nevertheless, in the few generations which have passed since the end of that terrible conflict, the world has changed almost beyond recognition, at a rate and to an extent not previously experienced in any time or place.⁸⁶ In short then, this chapter will attempt to explain how during this brief period, a marginal and initially truly radical set of economic ideas, which have

⁸⁶ Furthermore, these recent transformations have come hot on the heels of the hardly unremarkable nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such unprecedented processes of exponential social change have seemed unstoppable since the birth of the enlightenment whose ideas spread far and wide on the back of Gutenberg's first media revolution. In this sense, the foundations of globalisation stretch back many centuries. I hesitate to rely on historical punctuation marks but 1945 would perhaps seem as cogent as any. One could say it marked a temporary conclusion to the mayhem which, beginning in 1914, was not resolved with any satisfaction until the victory of the constitutionally democratic and liberally minded 'United Nations'.

come to be described generally as neoliberal, emerged as a dominant socio-economic and political ideology towards the end of the twentieth century. As Susan George notes:

In 1945 or 1950, if you had seriously proposed any of the ideas and policies in today's standard neo-liberal toolkit, you would have been laughed off the stage at or sent off to the insane asylum.

At least in the Western countries, at that time, everyone was a Keynesian, a social democrat or a social-Christian democrat or some shade of Marxist. (George 1999: n.p.)

How then, did neoliberal thought become so deeply embedded in public discourse as common sense? (as in Gramsci's understanding of sense held in common). Through a historical, discursive and normative analysis the chapter will attempt to provide a critical understanding of the emergence and entrenchment of these ideas and processes. It is, at least in part, normative in that it seeks to demonstrate how neoliberal ideology works to silence and exclude alternative conceptions of the political which, I argue, provide the possibility for more substantive opportunities for freedom, justice and human security for the majority world. As we shall see, the concept of freedom lies at the centre of liberal and neoliberal ideology but it is a highly restricted version, both theoretically and practically. It is theoretically restricted in that it limits freedom to an individualist, rational choice based version in which the free market determines the patterns and relations of production and consumption. As a result, the freedoms of neoliberalism are increasingly restricted to the minority who benefit sufficiently to have relative 'freedom of choice' in the marketplace.

Indeed, when we speak of neoliberalism and its etymological antecedent, liberalism, we should be sceptical about the assumed correspondence with democracy. As we are reminded by Norberto Bobbio "the liberals of modern times, for their part, were from the outset extremely suspicious of all forms of popular government, throughout the nineteenth century, and later, they upheld and defended limited suffrage" (1990: 31). We must therefore treat with suspicion the assumption that

capitalism and democracy are natural bedfellows. There is a profound “tension between the theory of neoliberalism and the actual pragmatics of neoliberalization” (Harvey 2007:21). A historical account which acknowledges the class element central to neoliberalization will help to debunk such assumptions and show that democracy has in many ways been more of a hindrance to the neoliberal project than any kind of necessary adjunct. The actual practice of neoliberalism has successfully subverted democratic forms whilst maintaining the powerful liberal discourse of liberty to promote the freedom of the few at the expense of the majority. The effort to tease out a feel for a definition of neoliberalism requires that we first have an understanding of liberalism. This is no simple task as, according to John Gray “liberalism is no more than a matter of loose family resemblances amongst a variety of views, thinkers institutions and movements, and accordingly there are indefinitely many liberalisms, none of which can claim to be uniquely authoritative or authentic” (Gray, 1995:87). Turner concurs: “neoliberalism is a tendency within liberalism”(2007:68) and which is itself not so much a coherent single political ideology but, as Jessop (2002: 453)points out:

a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. It is: a polyvalent conceptual ensemble in economic, political, and ideological discourse; a strongly contested strategic concept for restructuring market-state relations with many disputes over its scope, application, and limitations; and a recurrent yet historically variable pattern of economic, political, and social organization in modern societies. Liberalism rarely, if ever, exists in pure form; it typically coexists with elements from other discourses, strategies, and organizational patterns. Thus, it is better seen as one set of elements in the repertoire of Western economic, political, and ideological discourse than as a singular, univocal, and internally coherent discourse in its own right.

Indeed, while neoliberalism is one among many incarnations of liberalism (one which contains a considerable element of conservatism)⁸⁷, neoliberalism itself has a number of forms due to its emergence in various contexts. These variations have been detailed by Foucault who distinguishes between German and American manifestations of neoliberalism and Turner who, in addition, recognises the importance of an earlier British tradition which informed the German and U.S. variants. Despite these degrees of national variation it is easy to recognise the close connections between these and that the intellectual foundations of neoliberalism lie together in what Kees van der Pijl has called a 'Lockean Heartland'.

The growth of a Lockean heartland accordingly involves, in addition to a transnationalisation of civil society, the restructuring of state power along two axes: one of international socialisation of state functions, the other of a struggle for primacy between the states between which these functions are to be shared. Along either axis evolves an immanent 'world state' sustaining total capital on a global scale by upholding the Lockean state/society complex and the specific arrangements it defines—separation of politics from economics, a 'level playing field' in competition, individual freedom under the law, (van der Pijl 1998: 70-71)

During the second half of the eighteenth and early 20th century, mass migration from the UK to the US and the expanding circuits of finance capital essentially fused the two economies into a single core of the global economy. This combination also facilitated the growth in transnational networks of business cooperation and policy planning groups such as the Round Table and Rhodes Milner Group (Quigley 1981). These networks and collaborative groups were the foundation for both the rapid expansion of transnational institutions and the establishment of a transnational capitalist class (van der Pijl 1998).

⁸⁷ See Gamble 100-125 and Freedman 373-378 for discussions of the close links between neoliberalism and conservatism. See also Hayek (1960) 'Why I Am Not a Conservative' In *The Constitution of Liberty*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Available: <http://www.cato.org/pubs/articles/hayek-why-i-am-not-conservative.pdf>

Agents of Neoliberalism: A Transnational Capitalist Class TCC?

As van der Pijl has noted, "Understanding the relation between structural changes in production and the political struggles through which they take shape requires a historical as well as a transnational analysis" (1998: emphasis in original). In addition to this, and in a sense in which van der Pijl would concur, it must involve some form of class analysis in order to identify and in some sense classify the key agents of neoliberal capitalism and how they are connected. It is here that the chapter begins, with questions regarding the existence and influence of a ruling transnational neoliberal capitalist elite or class.

As already stated, it is indeed now almost beyond argument that we are witnessing, at some level at least, the emergence of a globally functioning, transversal socio-economic and political system based on the 'mechanism' of the free market, a process widely referred to as neoliberal or late capitalist globalisation. This process, I argue herein, is driven not simply by the irresistible and inexorable logic of capitalism to expand independently, but also by agents of a powerful ruling class whose discourses legitimise and reify the ideas, values and assumptions of neoliberalism, thus shaping the systems and processes (along with the injustices and inequities) associated with contemporary globalisation. The term class is not here used to denote specific ownership of the means of production as in the traditional Marxist sense, but to identify those who control, support and benefit most from it. According to Sklair, "this new transnational capitalist class (TCC), is composed of corporate executives, globalizing bureaucrats and politicians, globalizing professionals and consumerist elites" (2000:4) Identifying this class and its discursive strategies can help us better understand neoliberalism as a set of social practices as well as simply an ideology. In short it can reveal its 'performative' nature.

An understanding of the performativity of neoliberal capitalism is necessary, if perhaps not on its own sufficient, for its de-legitimisation and dismantling, both as a set of ideas and a range of social, political and economic practices. When we speak of the performativity of capitalism, we are referring to the extent to which its various discourses, identified by Bourdieu as 'strong discourses' (1998), constrain our perceptions of the opportunities reasonable to us and are therefore transmitted into the actions we take and the decisions we make, both as individuals and social groups, as workers, consumers, students, parents and in almost every aspect of our daily lives. The extent to which neoliberal discourse is now embedded as a dominant set of practices guided by 'common sense' is the most important obstacle for social transformations or even the most timid reforms. Discourses are not performative in and of themselves however, they require the action of conscious and practicing subjects or agents. These agents are not isolated individuals but conceive of their interests in terms of their social or intersubjective consciousness. In particular, this intersubjectivity is expressed and can be analysed through the concept of class.

Considering the fascination with globalisation among the left there has been surprisingly little attention paid recently, either in mainstream IR/IPE or indeed the social sciences more generally, to notions of class other than its demise as a useful category for analysis. Class as a concept has fallen out of favour since the 1970s as systems of production and patterns of consumption became ever more complex. Indeed, Clark and Lipset have asked in their (1991) article: *Are Social Classes Dying?* In so doing they assert that "Class analysis has grown increasingly inadequate in recent decades as traditional hierarchies have declined and new social differences have emerged." (397). Such an argument is perhaps understandable from the viewpoint that, in a post-industrial society (and it is important to remember here that much of humanity remains in an industrial or even pre-industrial society) the emergence and expansion of a politically salient middle class confuses and subverts the traditional notion of a mass proletarian class, poised to seize the means of production from the bourgeoisie. While I do not wish to challenge these observations and do not regard class

conflict on its own to be a *sufficient* medium for progressive social change or indeed that all inequalities can be reduced to class. Rather, I maintain that some aspects of the concept of class remain *necessary* categories for political analysis and the understanding of social power. Indeed, while many have found fault with a good deal of Marx's work, few attempt an outright denial of his assertion that any society marked by the unequal distribution of power must display elements of class formation, at least at some level(s).

Following Mann (1987), my focus here is almost exclusively upon the ruling or governing class which has emerged around circuits of transnational capital and in particular, the circuit of finance capital. As such, I suggest that in order to understand origin and development of global governance and governmentality, "emphasis should be placed on the strategies and cohesion of ruling classes" (Mann 1987:339). This is by no means to celebrate or overemphasise such power or to portray it as beyond resistance, although we must be wary of so doing. On the contrary, I suggest that the project of surmounting these material and ideological structures and edifices of power requires a deep understanding of their foundations, locations and strategies. The effective formation of a 'counter-hegemonic bloc', through a 'war of position' entails a realistic assessment of the considerable obstacles to maintaining social justice and participatory democratic institutions. A strategically selective analysis of the field of struggle demands an effective assessment of the existing institutional arrangements.

One of the best known arguments for the demise of the kinds of class conflict which seemed to characterise the late 19th and early 20th centuries has been the pioneering work of T.H Marshall (1973) who has suggested that the achievement of citizenship rights among industrial societies has curtailed the opportunity for open class conflict, although he maintains that conflict still continues

in an institutionalised and rule governed form.⁸⁸ In brief, Marshall's three generations of citizenship rights which achieved this apparent compromise were the civil-legal rights of the 18th century such as the rights to freedom of expression and assembly; the political rights gained largely through the 19th century which granted individuals the opportunity to participate in government through voting and standing for office. The 20th century saw the development of social and economic rights associated with the welfare state and social democracy. Marshall was writing at the very high point of social democracy and did not envisage the curtailing and rescinding of public social and economic rights, enshrined by the social-liberal democratic state, which I argue is a central prescription of neoliberal socio-economic policy. As a result, according to Marshall's thesis, we might presume that open class conflict may become more likely as these institutions are withdrawn, particularly in times of economic downturn and crisis where a greater number become reliant upon such public provision and the private supply of social goods is further restricted.

Furthermore, class analysis has been undertaken almost exclusively on a national basis as in the pioneering work of T.H. Marshall. One of the most relevant of these to the position taken here is still the classic analysis of C. Wright Mills more than 50 years ago in his seminal text *The Power Elite*. According to Mills this elite comprised:

[M]en whose positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men and women; they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences [...] They are in command of the major hierarchies and organisations of modern society. They rule the big corporations. They run the machinery of the state and claim its prerogatives. They direct the military establishment. They occupy the strategic command posts of the social structure, in which

⁸⁸ It should be noted that Marshall's chronology of citizenship is explicitly restricted to the development of rights in Britain and Mann, while holding to the most basic premise of Marshall's account, shows that a comparative study reveals a far more diverse array of possibilities for the development of citizenship (1987).

are now centred the effective means of power and the wealth and celebrity they enjoy. (1956: 4).

A good deal of Mills analysis remains remarkably true today, the key difference is the shift from a national (or even regional) elite to a global one and had Mills been writing 50 years later we might safely assume that his attention would be drawn in this direction. It is perhaps a little surprising then that aside from Sklair (2001), van der Pijl (1998) and some notable others working in the loosely neo-Gramscian tradition (Robinson 2004, Morton 2006), few social and political theorists have argued for the existence of a dominant class beyond the borders of the nation-state. Scott addresses the question briefly in *Corporate Business and Capitalist Classes* (1997) where he suggests that a TCC cannot be said to exist until the demographic relations of national capitalist classes change so that social relations between members of different nation states are as important as those between members of the same nation-state.

Sklair's interviews with senior executives and middle managers from the Fortune 500 however, showed that the vast majority of these regarded their corporations to be "in a transitional state between the multi-national corporation and the global corporation" (2001:73). This would suggest that a capitalist class is indeed emerging at the global level, with corporations in particular showing little or no attachment to any one country other than on a broad cost-benefit analysis. Further and equally compelling evidence is presented in a more recent contribution from David Rothkopf in his book *Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They are Making* (2008) in which he argues that a group of around 6,000 individuals represent a closely interconnected global power elite that wields an extensive and overarching influence upon the rest of global society whilst benefiting almost exclusively from the enormous wealth and new freedoms which unbridled global capitalism has produced in recent decades. However, Rothkopf details the huge wealth of the superclass but fails to sufficiently link his research on inequalities of wealth with the workings of power and their

ability to maintain and efforts to legitimise their status. As Aristotle asserts in the opening passages of *Nichomachean Ethics*: “wealth [...] is merely useful and for the sake of something else” (I.1096a5). What is in need of analysis is not so much the accumulation or disparity of wealth itself but the means by which it is transferred into the discursive power to sustain such inequities and render them ‘acceptable’ and normal. Nevertheless, a very brief look at current inequality trends is pertinent to the question of class and global stratification and the arguments presented here.

While Rothkopf admits 6,000 may appear to be a rather arbitrary figure, he expands and develops his analysis by acknowledging this group is an elite within an elite and furthermore within that 6,000 there exists a smaller group with even greater wealth and power. To illustrate, he draws briefly upon Vilfredo Pareto’s 80/20 principle which, to summarize considerably, observes that 20 per cent of the causes are responsible for 80 per cent of the consequences. Pareto (1927) developed this idea in studying income distribution in Italy where he discovered that roughly 20 per cent of the population was in receipt of 80 per cent of the national income.⁸⁹ Although the principle has been applied to myriad circumstances and contexts it does not deserve the pseudo-scientific status which it has gained in some areas. It is often ‘hedged’ by other ratio’s such as the ‘10/90 gap’ referred to by the Global Forum for Health Research (n.d.) in their findings that only ten per cent of worldwide expenditure on health research and development is devoted to the problems that primarily affect the poorest 90 per cent of the world’s population. Nevertheless, the UN statistics on inequality appear to fit quite closely with the Pareto principle. The *Report on the World Social Situation: The Inequality Predicament* states that “eighty per cent of the world’s gross domestic product belongs to the 1 billion people living in the developed world; the remaining 20 per cent is shared by the 5 billion people living in developing countries” (United Nations 2005). This report goes on to describe the many measures by which global inequality across a range of scales and

⁸⁹ See also the account of Pareto’s theory by Shirras (1935).

measures can be seen to have grown significantly since the beginning of neoliberalization in the early 1980's.

Rothkopf applies the Pareto principle merely to illustrate that within each elite grouping, wherever one chooses to draw the line of stratification, there exists another elite at a similar ratio.

When seeking to understand elites, always look for the elite within the elite. Within almost every application of the 80/20 rule there is another one waiting to be discovered. And oftentimes it turns out that an 80/20 rule understates the case. The reality is that when it comes to the unequal distribution of power, we will find that within the broader application of the 80/20 rule lies a 90/10 or even sometimes a 99/1 rule waiting to be revealed. (2008:38)⁹⁰

What is more important here though is not so much the identification of specific individuals or numerical demarcations and stratifications of wealth. More so the important relationship between cultural and material inequality and the global networks and hierarchies of power which this elite group or class have developed in the process of establishing and maintaining their influence as part of a global hegemonic historic bloc. Rothkopf details the ways in which his 'Superclass' demonstrates an increasing disconnection with the rest of society, living and working as a kind of variously spatially dispersed and socially and culturally isolated global community. However, he also shows how they are inter-connected not only instrumentally through interlocking directorships and links between politics, business and the media, their interaction goes beyond global conferences (WEF, G8, Bilderberg). They are also united by cultural similarities; their ease of travel, exclusive residences, shared luxury leisure pursuits and holiday locations, their exclusive access to each other within these less formal circuits tends to consolidate their hegemony and status as an active class and securing their consciousness as such (Rothkopf 2008: 111-144). An appreciation of

⁹⁰ The 99/1 ration has been picked up by the recent 'Occupy' fraction or manifestation of the global justice movement in their slogan of 'we are the 99%'.

the cultural complexity in this class formation demands, at least, recognition of the informal as well as the formal connections which bind their consciousness and confirms their awareness of themselves as a class ('for itself'). Unless necessary for political reasons and 'the right kind of regulation', they owe little or no allegiance to any particular nation, region or territory. Their domicile is largely determined by minimal tax burdens and access to the objects and lifestyles of luxury consumption. According to Rothkopf then, "such linkages are as distinguishing a characteristic of members of the superclass as wealth or individual position" (2008: 46). The growing divergence which Rothkopf demonstrates between the socio-economic and cultural networks or 'lifeworlds' of this class and any notions of national identity or loyalty suggests that Scott's conditions of a kind of 'self-awareness' for the ontological existence of a TCC have been largely fulfilled (ibid.: 24-30).

Furthermore, the analysis is useful in that it identifies some internal stratification or 'fractions' within a capitalist class which may represent important fissures within the capitalist class between a ruling 'superclass' and a more functional or technocratic managerial class which operationalizes the knowledge, policies, legislation and institutional arrangements devised at the level of the ruling class and transmitted through what Thrift (2005: 19-98) has referred to as the 'cultural circuits of capitalism'. These apparatchiks and technocrats of capitalism, while relatively wealthy and powerful on a global scale, are increasingly squeezed out of the larger cultural and economic rewards which accrue at the higher echelons of power, particularly in times of economic contraction. Moreover, their roles are increasingly devoid of serious decision-making or creativity and tend more toward administering pre-planned operational procedures and reporting and monitoring these processes for their auditing at higher levels of management, coordination and governance. Even outside the corporate/business environment, their work takes place within and is guided and surveilled pastorally by the exigencies of new public management (Salskov-Iversen *et al* 1999; Drechsler 2005).

The significance of this is that this particular section or strata of global society, largely knowledge and cultural workers of various types in the developed core of the global economy but also in parts of the underdeveloped periphery ('the north within the south'), is crucial for any prospect of alter-globalism. This 2nd tier neoliberal class fraction is both sufficiently numerous and wealthy for their political consciousness to be a key ideological battle ground in the struggle for social justice and new participatory democratic institutions. Their mass purchasing power is as vital for the sustenance of late capitalism as their technical knowledge and socio-cultural influence will be for an effective global justice movement. The growing inequality between these particular strata of global society is likely to be as significant a stimulus for transformative social change as any in the foreseeable future. The increasing socio-economic cleavages between the relatively rich and the superrich are illustrated in an article for the *New York Times* by Eric Konigsberg. He states that "while the percentage change in average real household income between 1990 and 2004 was an increase of 2 per cent for the bottom 90 per cent of American households, it increased 57 per cent for the top 1 per cent and shot up to 85 per cent for the top 0.1 per cent and up to 112 per cent for the top 0.01 per cent" (Konigsberg 2006: n.p.). This demonstration of a rising disparity among the most wealthy and influential sectors of the global economy is politically significant and deserves further research. It suggests that a TCC may not be as homogenous as some observers assume, or at least that we might need to think more carefully about how we define and demarcate classes and social strata on a global scale. Despite these caveats careful consideration must be given to these questions as any widening of such social cleavages within the ruling echelons might indicate opportunities for alter-global and counter-capitalist resistance to increase their support base and with an influential and politically powerful social stratum.

These 'cultural circuits of capitalism' which operate within this knowledge economy (such as journalism, academia, and, according to Thrift (2005), especially business schools, management discourse and the corporate/ business media), comprise the primary means by which the neoliberal

ideology is disseminated and transmitted into social and political practice. They represent the discursive and performative aspects and agency of neoliberalism in that they influence the way businesses and, as a corollary, workers function, (re)produce, consume, communicate and (inter)act.

While Rothkopf (2008) identifies military and religious leaders, media personalities/cultural 'icons' and even organised crime syndicates in his analysis, he concedes that "[o]f all the different types of individuals who make up the global superclass, the single largest group is leaders in business and finance" (2008: 33). Although his attention to the 'celebrity' (to borrow again from Mills) members of the superclass indicates the importance of these figures to reproduce popular cultures of 'aspirational' consumption, Rothkopf pays insufficient attention to the ways and means by which their ideas, values and influence are transmitted into the popular public consciousness. Despite an account of how wealth and power has been maintained by the superclass through inheritance and the establishment of corporations (77-110), his analysis is rather short on any suggestion as to how such massive and growing inequality is legitimised by the culture and the system of ideas the superclass maintains and reifies. The standard justification is noted yet remains largely unchallenged in his work: "one of the first rationales given is that such people are best able to reinvest the money and thus create jobs and fuel growth. *The merits of the argument aside*, it is certainly true that having substantial financial resources translates into that asset allocation power" (ibid.: 89, my emphasis). The argument, whose merits cannot really be just left 'aside', is based upon neoliberal assumptions about human nature and social organisation that stem from an assertion that the 'free market' is the most reliable and legitimate institution by which to decide upon the distribution of economic resources and hence the various kinds of power which flows from their accumulation. This justification for a market society draws its legitimacy from the classical liberal arguments stretching back through John Stuart Mill to John Locke and even, to a lesser extent, Thomas Hobbes.

These ideas deserve some further attention in attempting to understand neoliberalism and their philosophical (and ideological) links with later liberal thinkers will be explored briefly below. John Locke however, is perhaps the key thinker to mention briefly here as a philosophical foundation of classical liberalism and neoliberalism. Locke, in his *Two Treatises on Government* concurred with Hobbes in maintaining the existence of a 'state of nature' but implied a much less brutal conception where human reason (and the resulting contractual obligations) would temper the baser instincts of greed and selfishness. Locke insists that "the state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it" (2nd Tr., §6). Turner (2008) has detailed the centrality of Lockean constitutionalism to neoliberal ideology and practice and suggests that as a result, neoliberalism emphasises a rule of law which must circumscribe the range of activities in which government might engage.

Locke also followed Hobbes in recognising the need for a pooling of individual sovereignty into a central sovereign but argued, anticipating Mill, for a vigorous private sphere comprising relatively autonomous individuals, associations and institutions by which the authority of the central sovereign state might be mediated or restrained. This is the original liberal conception of the term civil society later appropriated and further developed by Gramsci in the 1930s. In Locke's philosophy however the authority of the private sphere was legitimised through its allocation to those with most at stake in society i.e. those with property. The contemporary hegemony which these ideas and assumptions have attained, unsurprisingly leads to an increase in power for those agents most able to accumulate economic resources, i.e. business corporations. Before continuing my discussion of the resurgence and partial reinvention of these ideas in the revival of neoclassical liberal economics during the 20th century, I wish to say a little more about the agents and networks which have both facilitated their renaissance and in turn, benefited so greatly from it.

Transnational corporate power

Undoubtedly, the state, and some states to a significantly greater extent than others (SIACS), retains the ability to wield considerable power as a result of its exclusive ability to accumulate and redistribute material resources, or 'property', through taxation. Its legitimacy stems from its provision of social goods and the maintenance of the rule of law upon which, to varying degrees this wealth is dispensed. In recent decades however, corporations, and in particular multi- or transnational corporations (TNCs), a relatively new actor in international relations, have come under scrutiny for their own greatly expanded ability to exert power due to their increased capital power and the structural changes (state policies of deregulation and privatisation since the 1980's) both at the behest of neoliberal governments in the core of the global economy such as the US and UK and also as a result of multilateral trade agreements and structural adjustment programmes negotiated by institutions which were dominated by those governments.

The point here is that much of the power assumed by TNCs in recent decades has been afforded to them by a handful of neoliberal governments in states where these corporations emerged and were originally domiciled. This acquiescence on the part of advanced states in the Lockean Heartland must be considered in tandem with the deepening enmeshment of political elites with commercial, cultural, industrial and in particular financial elites. As these relationships have developed through recent decades, the distinction between the two (state and market) becomes increasingly difficult to sustain. The interlocking directorships which van der Pijl and Sklair referred to now stretch deeply into the highest echelons of government. George Monbiot provides an extensive list of such connections in the early UK New Labour administration in his (2000: 208-224) *Captive State*. More recently, close links between the Bush administration and the oil industry have allowed the latter to operate with far fewer constraints in the Middle East (Madsen, 2002; Little 2008). Sklair (2001) regards TNCs as the most important aspect of what he identifies as an elite social movement for

capitalism and highlights the close connections between them and its other constituent groups in the TCC.

The increasing salience of various dimensions of corporate power represents a vast and rapidly expanding body of literature in and around the discipline of IR/IPE (Barnett 1975; Strange 1996; Korten 1995; Kaplinsky 1991). Gilpin has noted that their growing salience has “profoundly altered the structure and functioning of the global economy” (2001: 290) and Cox has argued that such “changes in the organization of production generate new social forces which , in turn, bring about changes in the structure of states and [...] alters the problematic of world order” (1986: 220). This fact in itself testifies to the growing importance of these actors among the wider proliferation of powerful non-state actors in global politics. Interest in TNCs in IR began as far back as 1972 with a special issue of *International Studies Quarterly* entitled ‘Multinational Corporations and World Order’ and remains an important focus today with large sections of contemporary IR textbooks addressing TNC’s and/or corporate power in some way. Another important early text came from Stephen Hymer, who as early as 1970 recognised that “large corporations are consciously moving towards an international perspective much faster than other institutions and especially much faster than governments, and are in the vanguard of planners of the new international economy” (1970: 443). Drawing on his detailed and widespread study of TNCs, Hymer soon came to recognise that “an international capitalist class is emerging whose interests lie in the world economy as a whole system of international private property which allows free movement of capital between countries” (1979: 262) and that TNCs were absolutely central to this process.

Among the most comprehensive accounts of these developments written from within the broadly liberal tradition has been the work of David Korten. His (1995) book, *When Corporations Rule the World*, provides a detailed account of the historical and legislative changes (mostly specific to the United States) which have led to a massive growth in the political power and salience of these

actors. Again, here the 1970s is portrayed as a watershed in that it marks a profound shift in the behaviour of TNC's. Korten notes how from this period in particular, TNC's began to act more widely and vociferously in public affairs and their focus expanded from business into a more overtly political role. The massive profits generated by these actors have been instrumental in cementing a neoliberal agenda through the funding of numerous cultural and educational institutions. In 1978 the Institute for Educational Affairs was set up in the USA to facilitate stronger links between corporate funders and sympathetic scholars who would produce research favourable to corporate interests (Korten 1995: 143; Alliance for Justice 1993: 3). More broadly, the formation of new neoliberal think tanks such as the Institute for Economic Affairs in the UK and the Heritage Foundation in the USA and the revival of existing ones such as the American Enterprise Institute, which experienced a ten-fold increase in its budget through the 1970's (Greider 1992: 48), has been central to the dissemination of neoliberal ideology. In the process the AEI was transformed into one of the key agents for this counter-revolution in ideas, manipulating the opinions and reflexes of both policy-makers and the mass media. The AEI receives substantial annual subscriptions from some of the largest Banks and corporations in the USA: AT&T \$121,000; Chase Manhattan, \$171,000; Chevron, \$95,000; Citicorp, \$100,000; Exxon, \$130,000; General Electric, \$65,000; General Motors, \$100,000; Proctor and Gamble, \$165,000 (ibid.: 48). It is not hard to see how the scholars of this thinktank, and the numerous others, might be wary of producing research which is contrary to the interests of major TNCs.

In addition to these educational and cultural institutions, TNCs have also widely adopted a more directly political role in order to increase their influence. Since the early 1970s, large scale corporate actors, working together and combining their shared business interests and muscle, began to set up their own so-called citizens organisations as a front to dismantle government regulations over the environment and consumer protection (Korten 1995: 142-148). Many of these organisations and lobby groups have evolved from their national roots and plugged into a proto-

world-state structure of transnational policy networks and institutions with a responsibility to formulate the global regulatory framework for economic governance. This has also been achieved through the various corporate-political channels of neoliberal states. Indeed, it is the connections between TNCs and a range of quasi-governmental policy networks which presents the most compelling case for the existence and agency of a TCC. Carroll and Carson (2006) identify five key international policy groups. These are the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC); Bilderberg conferences (BC); The Trilateral commission (TC); the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). According to Carroll and Carson, these groups (as well as a number of others) “provide intellectual leadership that is indispensable in the ongoing effort to transform transnational capital from an economically dominant class to a class whose interests take on a sense of universalism” (2006: 60). In order to demonstrate this close connection between transnational policy groups and TNCs, Carroll and Carson (2006) show the membership of 28 corporate directors on the global policy boards of the above five policy networks (see chart below).

Corporation	Domicile	TC	WBCDS	BLD	WEF	ICC	Total
ABB	Switzerland	2	2	2	3	1	10
CIBC	Canada	4	1	2	1	0	8
GM	USA	1	3	2	2	0	8
Unilever	Dutch/UK	3	2	1	1	0	7
Sara Lee	USA	2	1	3	1	0	7
Xerox	USA	2	3	2	0	0	7
BP	UK	1	2	1	1	0	5
Aquitane	France	1	1	2	1	0	5
Nestle	Switzerland	1	2	0	1	1	5
HSBC	UK	2	1	0	1	0	4
Fina (Total)	Belgium	3	0	1	0	0	4
Generale Bank (Fortis Bank)	Belgium	3	0	1	0	0	4
Ericsson	Sweden	1	0	2	1	0	4
Kansai Energy	Japan	4	0	0	0	0	4
3M	USA	2	1	0	0	1	4
American International	USA	3	0	1	0	0	4
Chase Manhattan	USA	4	0	0	0	0	4
Dayton Hudson	USA	2	1	0	0	1	4
Lucent	USA	2	1	1	0	0	4
SmithKline Beecham	UK	1	1	1	0	0	3
Deutsche Bank	Germany	1	0	1	1	0	3
Siemens	Germany	1	0	1	1	0	3
VW	Germany	2	0	0	1	0	3
Itochu	Japan	1	1	0	1	0	3
American Express	USA	1	0	2	0	0	3
DuPont	USA	0	1	1	1	0	3
Prudential	USA	3	0	0	0	0	3
Source: Carroll and Carlson in Plehwe, Walpen and Neunhoffer (2006: 63)							

Figure 4. The TCC and global policy networks

Undoubtedly, the institution which has benefited most from the rise of neoliberalism then is the TNC and it represents a major instrument of change in the armoury of the neoliberal TCC. Granted, a handful of core and 'BRIC' states have maintained and may even have increased their power, at least in relation to many other peripheral states, but they have done so largely as a result of wealth and influence created by their support for, and close collaboration with, corporations through the

introduction, maintenance and development of neoliberal policies, institutions and legislation at multiple levels of governance. TNCs then have become increasingly powerful in terms of their considerable and growing influence upon the overlapping and intertwining political structures and institutions of class and state. Concurrently, multiple institutions of governance have expanded their influence in recent decades to challenge and re-scale the sovereignty of the state and these are by no means all neoliberal in origin. Such institutions vary greatly in terms of their size, age, formality, influence, salience, autonomy, ideology but all have come to be influenced and significantly re-constituted, to some extent at least, by the ideas of neoliberalism.⁹¹ An understanding of this trend is necessary in order to navigate these complex historical processes and so that alternative modes of socio-economic organisation, based on different underlying ideas and beliefs about politics and considered 'against human nature' within neoliberal ideology and discourse, can gain greater purchase and legitimacy in public discussion and debate. I suggest that such alternatives need not discount or reject all aspects of the liberal tradition of thought, but must understand that the core tenets and proscriptions of neoliberalism, according to which these transformations have occurred, represent a highly restrictive and narrow formulation of the liberal ideas from which they purport to stem and derive much of their legitimacy.

As these developments and their implications have been discussed and analysed in more detail elsewhere, what remains is to interrogate the history and discourses of neoliberalism with a view to further revealing the ways in which it represents and thus reproduces the social and political world. We are left with question of just how this dispossession, disenfranchisement and redistribution of power and resources to a minority group (what we have termed the TCC) has been achieved and legitimised with such surprisingly little resistance.

⁹¹ Outside of intergovernmental institutions such as the EU or UN, IMF or World Bank, Perhaps the most important of these institutions are global corporations who are now themselves important sources of neoliberal discourse.

While I have referred to a post-Bretton Woods global economic system somewhat homogenously as 'late capitalism' underpinned with an ideology of neoliberalism, even within this period, capitalism has demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt and respond effectively to new circumstances, opportunities and obstacles. It is important to remember that capitalism is not purely determinant but also profoundly responsive to, and highly dependent upon, events and developments in global politics and society. This contingency makes it difficult to gain an accurate 'picture' of neoliberalism and despite many studies which have examined its effects and implications at particular times and places, more detailed accounts of neoliberalism in the abstract have until recently been relatively rare. In the past few years however, some welcome exceptions to this lacuna have emerged. (Harvey 2006; Turner 2007; 2008 Howard and King 2008; Plehwe *et al* 1996; Dumenil and Levy 1994).

Neoliberalism and the counter-revolution in ideas

Just one month after the end of hostilities in Europe, *The Economist*, which as will be shown below became a leading proponent of neoliberal ideology, clearly signalled its support for the prevailing consensus over the need make some limited attempt to reign in the laissez faire liberalism of free market ideology:

It is a matter of the most obvious common sense that in this day and age, the best form of economic organisation for a complex industrial country lies somewhere between the extremes of *laissez faire* and bureaucracy, of full control and no control...there are...two vital principles of economic action, the adventuring power of the individual and the organizing power of the state and if a democratic community is to successfully confront the complex problems of this puzzling age, it will need the maximum assistance that both principles can give. (*The Economist* 1945 23rd June)

The discourse analysis which forms the final part of this chapter will reveal a rather different perspective and a far greater scepticism, even outright hostility, toward democratic state control and planning from *The Economist*.

However, in order to fully understand the nature and significance of neoliberal discourse as represented by the contemporary *Economist*, it is first necessary to comprehend some of the more long-standing tenets of liberal ideology from which it emerged. For those countries representing the core of the global economy, the birthplace of the industrial revolution and the intellectual roots of contemporary 'western civilisation', liberal culture has, in its various forms, been long dominant. Indeed, for many, liberal values lie at the very heart of western civilisation (Turner 2007). The intellectual and active movements of 'the left' have, as we have discussed, been constructed largely in opposition to this dominant set of values. Nevertheless, critical and radical movements have shared much of the terminology of liberalism due to their shared inheritance of enlightenment thought and some commentators have suggested that some of "the differences between egalitarian liberalism and some theories of social justice are often difficult to discern" (Turner 2007: 80 fn). Indeed, Eric Hobsbawm notes that "[t]he socialist labour movements, were actually, both in theory and in practice, as passionately committed to the values of reason, science, progress, education and individual freedom as anyone" (1994: 110). In support of this claim he goes on to describe the Mayday medal of the German Social Democratic Party as showing Karl Marx on one side and the Statue of Liberty on the other (ibid.).

Social democrats such as Bernstein were increasingly persuaded that socialism might be achieved through parliamentary means rather than revolution.⁹² At the same time the suspicion that the so-called self-regulating market could not be 'dis-embedded' from the social and political realm

⁹² Indeed, while Marx had insisted on the inevitability of socialism, he did not revolution was the only means by which it might be achieved but that only if other avenues were closed off then revolution would foster the transition.

without catastrophic consequences. The stock market crash and subsequent depression was perhaps the final nail in the coffin of classical liberalism and what remnants remained became bound up in the collectivist zeitgeist. It was this convergence of liberalism and socialism in the years following WWI that led some liberals to speak of a crisis of liberalism.

The resulting practical, theoretical and discursive tensions have persisted, perhaps most notably around the traditionally controversial relationship between notions of freedom and equality/justice and more recently around conceptions of democracy, sovereignty and civil society (Held 2002; Pogge 2002). Such far-reaching debates cannot be rehearsed in detail here, but I suggest that what I draw out in the historical emergence and theoretical distinctions of neoliberalism and in a brief discourse analysis of *The Economist* will contribute to these debates and highlight their contemporary importance. It should help demonstrate how neoliberalism and the ruling class or historic bloc which it serves, has reinterpreted and subverted long-standing elements of classical liberal thought that have maintained throughout a strong hold upon western/modern political consciousness, whilst jettisoning many of those aspects on the left of the broad liberal spectrum.⁹³ The evident failures and contradictions of late capitalism such as inequality, insecurity, imperial wars, exploitation, injustice, unsustainability are all 'addressed' in neoliberal discourse (and in *The Economist*). But they are legitimised as natural, necessary, temporary or merely the result of *insufficient* market reform or residual regulation, through a lexicon which connects with the conventional wisdoms and common sense notions which are buried in our everyday language and social practices.

⁹³ We might consider the work of Hobson, Hobhouse, Keynes, Dewey, Rawls and Rorty among a host of other 'liberal' scholars all of whose thought, in quite different ways, strays very wide of the neoliberal model.

Rational choice theory and 'freedom of choice'

For example, rational choice theory, as already discussed in chapter two, which appears to have successfully traversed the supposed divide between economics and politics and still represents a major school of thought in Politics and IR, gains greater purchase due to common assumptions regarding its binary opposite. An irrational choice, or argument, in everyday use would be one that appears to defy logic or even verging on the nonsensical. Such general discursive devices reify both the embedded notions of the rational and irrational in everyday discourse as well as the neoliberal ideology that market forces are a sensible and beneficial means to organise society and politics.

Theories of rational choice became repackaged in Politics as '*public* choice' theory which then become more closely and easily linked with a public discourse and 'common sense' notions of freedom of choice in a market society (Dunleavy 1991). This then becomes translated into arguments which intrinsically link consumer capitalism with democracy. In short, such arguments seem to equate a freedom to choose, for example, from dozens of different breakfast cereals, with an ability to participate meaningfully in political decision making. When spelled out in such a stark way this seems a ludicrous argument, but it is one of the most fundamental ways in which market society has become associated in popular consciousness with freedom and hence a quite formalized democracy based on highly circumscribed and unequal economic freedom.

Freedom is what all these groups claim to stand for. But the freedom they promote is of a particular kind. They are not campaigning for freedom from hunger or poverty. They are not demanding free access to health and education. They are not lobbying for freedom from industrial injuries, exploitation, pollution or unscrupulous banking. When these libertarians say freedom, they mean freedom from the rules that prevent their sponsors behaving as they wish: mistreating their workers, threatening public health and using the planet as their dustbin.

(Monbiot 2011: n.p.)

While individual freedom holds an exalted place in the neoliberal lexicon then, democracy in any substantive sense is not so valorized. Indeed, for Hayek, democracy was a distinctly bounded concept and by no means necessary for a market order. According to him “If democracy is taken to mean government by the unrestricted will of the majority, I am not a democrat and I even regard such government as pernicious and in the long run unworkable” (1982: 39). Indeed, For Hayek, democracy may be discarded in circumstances where individual liberty is threatened. Neoliberalism then accepts that when democracy poses a threat to principles of liberty, authoritarianism may be preferable in order to maintain those freedoms (Gamble 1996 : 92).

Despite the rather spurious democratic credentials which neoliberalism claims for itself then, it remains the dominant ideology of a TCC and effectively holds forth as a normalised discourse in the mass media and general public consciousness. Such a state of affairs was of course not always the case. Indeed, it is useful to remember that neoliberalism began as a counter-movement. Perhaps unwittingly, the neoliberals had learned the lessons of Antonio Gramsci well. The theory of hegemony recognises the crucial role of ideas in the establishment and maintenance of a particular socio-economic and political order.

Indeed, despite the Marxist heritage associated with the theory of hegemony, it is the New Right which appears, perhaps unwittingly, to have drawn most benefit from Gramsci’s thought. This political movement recognised the power of ideas and therefore the role of ideas, culture, education and knowledge production for the task of discrediting of collectivism and the dismantling of the Keynesian welfare-based state and full employment model of national and international political economy, in favour of a neoliberal global market society. As we shall see, many of the ideas and debates that crystallized into the policies of neoliberalism from the late 1970s percolated for decades through regular international conferences, well-resourced thinktanks and even the lecture halls and dusty journals of academia. These institutions provided space and resources for

a very free exchange of ideas from which neoliberal thought benefited hugely and the lesson was not forgotten; the crucial role of academia, especially Economics and later Business and Management schools, in providing opportunities for new and critical ideas to freely challenge the new orthodoxy has been a concern for neoliberals since their ascendancy and their solution is as simple as it is obvious. The extension of market logic into higher education is not merely another example of state services to be subsumed with all the others. Certain cultural sectors such as education, media and information and communications technology, are particularly important to a ruling class with an understanding of hegemony. To borrow from the famous terminology of Marshall McLuhan, the medium itself becomes the message, control of the medium provides control of the message. Critical perspectives are further marginalised and the dominant discourse prevails as it presents a more marketable product, be that a newspaper, TV channel, journal, conference, course module, research proposal. Such things are increasingly evaluated according to their crudely economic and monetary returns rather than their broadly social or cultural benefit. Their inherent political value and utility becomes bound up in the commercial process.

In recognition of the importance of ideas to political power, since World War Two, wealthy disciples to this creed of liberalized conservatism,⁹⁴ who would later evolve into the New Right has funded scholarship, set up research centres, endowed university chairs, paid for numerous conferences, seminars and periodicals and supported any development and dissemination of ideas beneficial to corporate capital and financial markets. Conservative foundations and think tanks such as The American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation were founded with the huge fortunes amassed by corporations in the post-war United States. According to Susan George (2004: 192), “In the past 20 years ultra-conservative US foundations have spent a billion dollars to these ends” (i.e. the development and dissemination of neoliberal ideology). Their efforts have culminated in

⁹⁴ Anthony Fisher is a particularly influential figure for the British neoliberal story. For an excellent account of his founding of the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) see Cockett (1995: 122-199).

such confident declarations as ‘the end of history’ (Fukuyama, 1989, 1992) and ‘there is no alternative’ (TINA).⁹⁵ In the core economies of the global system, democracy and citizenship have been forged into a liberal-capitalist and consumerist form, restricted to parliamentary representational systems where business interests freely influence domestic and international policy. This outright rejection of alternatives stretches back to some of the earliest proponents of the neoliberal model:

The alternative is not plan or no plan. The question is: whose planning? Should each member of society plan for himself or should the paternal government alone plan for all? The issue is spontaneous action of each individual versus the exclusive action of the government. It is freedom versus government omnipotence. (von Mises 1936:31-32)

The clear implication here is that the extent to which government might be democratic is simply not a concern. Government is ‘paternal’, suggesting that it treats citizens as children, and it is ‘omnipotent’, which implies a certain religious or god-like status which can be seen as derogatory in the rational, secular worlds of business, economics and in many respects the social ‘sciences’ more generally. The counterposition of freedom to government intervention or planning is a familiar theme of neoliberal discourse today but in the 1930s, when von Mises was writing, government intervention in the economy, long term planning and protectionism were increasingly the norm in a variety of national forms⁹⁶ and we should read the above quote in its historical context.

⁹⁵ This quote, widely attributed to the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, refers to the supposed victory of capitalism over all other forms of social organisation. The alter-globalist mantra ‘Another World is Possible’ is sometimes assumed to be a direct response to this claim.

⁹⁶ From Stalin’s five year plans to the command economy of Nazism and in between were the variously Keynesian economic models of, for example, Britain (Rooth 1993), the US (Blyth 2002: 49-95), Sweden (Berman 1998) and a range of other national manifestations of social democratic arrangements.

Indeed, in order to unearth the ideological origins of neoliberal thought we must consider the years preceding World War Two during which classical liberal thought began to fall out of favour, both with the masses as well as with many intellectual and elite groups. This decline of classical liberalism and the rise of various forms of collectivism represents the context in which a small group of political and economic thinkers began espousing the ideas which condensed into those we recognize today as neoliberalism. In order to understand those ideas it is necessary to understand that socio-cultural, historical and political context.

Between the wars: from *laissez faire* to The Death of Liberalism?

Liberal philosophy had unquestionably been the dominant school of thought in the West for much of the nineteenth century in terms of both politics and economics and toward the latter half had begun to drift toward a more *laissez faire* perspective associated with the marginalism of Jevons, Menger and Walras (van der Pijl 2009) and Manchester school capitalism (Grampp 1960). Despite the feeling by many that such tendencies had played an important part in the apparent collapse of the 'hundred years peace' and the descent into world war and the subsequent economic crisis (see Polanyi 2001[1944]), liberal values persisted into the 1920's and were generally perceived by many as being in opposition to the rise of the extremist politics of fascism and communism. Indeed, aside from Russia, all the countries which emerged from the catastrophe of WWI were essentially representative parliamentary regimes. Importantly though, the classical liberalism of the 19th century had begun to incorporate much of the collectivist zeitgeist, to the extent that the dominant model of political organisation in Western states was a very different one from that which had characterised them before World War One.⁹⁷ Indeed, the forced collectivism, centralisation and

⁹⁷ Such values were also beginning to spread beyond Europe to much of Latin America and even parts of Asia (see Hobsbawm 1994:111).

intensive state planning which those states had undergone before and during the war had left them far more capable of centrally organising their peacetime economies. The rapidly expanding communications revolution ushered in new propaganda opportunities for governments and the fostering of collective national spirits. This potent cocktail of culture and national politics reached its dark climax in the propagandist work of Leni Riefenstahl and Joseph Goebbels. However, it was not just governments and politicians who recognised the vast opportunities offered up by these new technologies. Corporate executives and those who they hired to advertise their products were also salivating at the new markets opened up by these novel forms of mass communication.

In the years between the world wars extremist politics placed states and societies in conflict of various intensities from Russia, across the continent of Europe to Spain. For the most part spared the political turbulence across the water, in Britain and the US political liberalism was alive and well and widely still considered a necessary corrective to the hot-headed passions of the continent. Many of the continental neoliberal founders such as F.A. Hayek emigrated to these bastions of their beloved liberal traditions. Nevertheless, a discernibly collectivist element was a growing feature of this Atlantic liberalism also. The global economic crash of 1929 led an increasing number of politicians, philosophers, economists etcetera, to further question the efficacy of classical liberal economic theory. The economist John Maynard Keynes and his *General Theory of Employment Interest and Money* (1936) offered a solution which seemed to chime with the widespread understanding of the causes of the Crash and subsequent depression and sat well with the prevailing collectivist ethos.

In short, Keynes' work, responding to the rising and dangerous levels of unemployment affecting the economies of many liberal democratic states at the time, suggested that such a phenomenon was not determined by the price of labour, as argued in the neoclassical economics of the

marginalists and Austrian school⁹⁸ but by 'aggregate demand' (spending of money). Such demand, argued Keynes, could be stimulated by government intervention and public spending on capital projects. This policy framework was adopted most notably in the USA under Roosevelt's New Deal and after the war formed an important economic pillar of US policy through the Kennedy administration and into Johnson's 'Great Society' programmes. In Britain, the Beveridge Report which would form the cornerstone of post war labour economic policy, was also based on Keynesian principles. (Cockett 1995: 57-99)

It was a theory which the neoliberal economists of the Austrian School were vehemently opposed as they were of the opinion that such government intervention accelerated collectivist tendencies and as such contained the danger of pushing these liberal democracies in the direction of fascism or communism. This was by no means the intention of Keynes and his followers. Keynes recognised that the substantial advances toward constitutional democracy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had been largely borne on the back of liberal ideas and he regarded his proscriptions as a necessary means to protect those important accomplishments from the tide of extremism and totalitarianism. Keynes regarded his ideas as the only means by which liberalism might be rescued from its widely recognised decline. This palpable decline is illustrated in the words of Laski, speaking at the Tenth Hobhouse Memorial Lecture at the LSE on 24th of May 1940 on 'The Decline of Liberalism':

We must if we are to be honest, admit that the liberalism for which Hobhouse battled so bravely has suffered an eclipse as startling and as complete as that which attended the doctrine of the divine right of Kings after the revolution of 1688. (in Cockett 1995: 59)

⁹⁸ As Veblen notes, "the so-called Austrian school is scarcely distinguishable from the neo-classical, unless it be in the different distribution of emphasis" (1919: 171)

In the US, the New Deal Keynesianism had caught the attention of influential columnist Walter Lippmann whose (1937) *Good Society* mirrored many concerns of the European neoliberals regarding the fate of liberalism. Lippmann is a crucial figure due to his earlier writings on Propaganda and Public opinion which demonstrated some distinct reservations about democracy which he considered dangerous due to the supposed propensity to irrational drives and 'mob rule' of newly emergent mass societies. Lippmann was also a close colleague of the propagandist and inventor of public relations Edward Bernays. Lippmann worked on the Committee for Public Information which Bernays had founded and their combined interest and talents can be seen as crucial for the successful strategy employed by the neoliberals through the subsequent decades. The expertise and connections of Lippmann made him an invaluable ally for those recognising the importance of ideas in politics and seeking to engineer the rebirth of liberalism in Europe.

In honour of Lippmann's *Good Society*, the European neoclassical liberals organised an international conference in Paris in 1938 to discuss the book and the project to revive the liberalism which they held so dear. Aside from Lippmann, the conference was attended by 25 other sympathisers from across Europe. This conference, The Colloque Walter Lippmann, would have a considerable impact on the fate of liberalism over the subsequent decades. According to Turner:

It represented the first coherent attempt to bring together the leading proponents of freedom in the world for a reconsideration of the legacy of liberalism. Attempts were made to develop a 'new', revitalized interpretation of liberalism that both moved beyond the outmoded nineteenth-century conception of laissez-faire liberalism and challenged existing collectivist streams of thought. (2007: 72)

The central aim of the conference was to create an altogether 'new' liberalism to combat the dominant collectivist impulse without resorting to the crude and discredited *laissez faire*

Manchester capitalism of the late 19th and early 20th century.⁹⁹ Those attending agreed to develop their cause internationally through regular conferences and the publication of their ideas both in academic journals and the popular press.

F.A Hayek: *The Road to Serfdom* and the Mont Pelerin Society

Just a year after the conference however, Europe descended into open conflict and many of the short-term plans of the group were shelved. The ideas percolated through the war years however and in 1944 F.A. Hayek published perhaps the most important work on neoliberalism to date. *The Road to Serfdom*. The central claim of this book was the notion that collectivism of any kind would inevitably intensify in its regulation and circumscription of individual freedoms and as a result end in totalitarian forms of government. The central planning advocated by Keynes then, was seen as the first step in a journey which would inevitably lead to dictatorship and slavery or 'serfdom'. The Road to Serfdom began as a series of papers responding to the work of Oskar Lange and others during the 1930's regarding the economic feasibility of socialism and the possibility, in the case of Lange in particular, of market socialism. These debates led Hayek to develop a series of articles in the years preceding WWII the result of which was the publication in 1944 of *The Road to Serfdom*. It was a direct and explicit attack on Keynesian political economy and the governments which were implementing those policies. Hayek argued that such policies would, one way or another, end in crisis as they required ever more state intervention. The only solution to such a situation was the 'spontaneous order' order of the market mechanism. This 'hidden hand' of Adam Smith is a far more efficient distributor of goods than the state as no government can gain sufficient information about the economy to direct it efficiently. The automatic 'laws' of supply and demand are the only means by which goods can find their proper price and position in an economic system.

⁹⁹ It was here that German economist Alexander Rustow coined the term neoliberal but it was never especially popular with those who it sought to describe (Turner 2007: 72)

The importance of the book is underscored by the success with which its ideas were disseminated. Its polemical style and populist appeal gave it an appeal beyond the economics profession. Indeed, Hayek admits in the preface to the work that 'it is a political book'. The immediate popularity of the book, combined with wartime paper rationing, meant that it sold out instantly and in 1945, Readers Digest published a condensed version which sold in the hundreds of thousands (Cockett 1995: 100). Shortly after, General Motors commissioned a 'childrens' illustrated version for Look magazine where the arguments are stripped down yet further to their most basic form.¹⁰⁰

Hayek is then perhaps the single most important thinker in the development and transmission of neoliberal ideas. Indeed, Hayek is hardly a surprising individual to pick out in an analysis of the emergence of neoliberalism. He has been seen, at least in recent decades, as much of a bogeyman of left politics, commentary and academia as he has been a darling of the New Right. What is less appreciated among his many proponents and critics however, was his early marginalisation in (and even ostracization from) the field of economics for many years. There are a number of reasons for this; perhaps the most notable was his contribution to many different academic disciplines including politics, philosophy, the history of ideas and psychology. Many economists felt these excursions into the social, cultural and political aspects of human existence obscured and polluted his (or anyone's) economic analysis. In the end however, it was perhaps these wider intellectual pursuits which gave his work such readability and credibility among those groups wishing to overturn the growing democratisation of politics and dominant Keynesian consensus.

Hayek was always critical of the scientism which still today pervades and dominates the discipline of economics. Interestingly, the strict separation between politics and economics which is often professed within contemporary neoliberal discourse and the field of economics generally is not wholly or consistently evident in Hayek's thought. What is clear though is that Hayek had a quite

¹⁰⁰ See Ludwig von Mises Institute: <http://mises.org/books/TRTS/>

restrictive view on what government and politics should entail. His strictly constitutional view of the role of government is akin to what is sometimes referred to as the nightwatchman state (Gamble 2001).

In this and other ways, Hayek, like many social and political thinkers before him including Adam Smith and Karl Marx, has been widely misunderstood and misappropriated for various political ends. This is nevertheless, not an attempt to defend Hayek on this ground, indeed Hayek and his fellow intellectual travellers themselves stripped away important social aspects of liberal thought in order to reformulate liberalism to fit his own political prejudices and philosophical conception of political economy.

However, it should not be forgotten that despite the important contribution of Hayek, and in particular the *Road to Serfdom*, the neoliberal project was very much a collective effort. To appreciate the impetus for and subsequent impact of the book it is important to consider the growing international circle of intellectuals who shared Hayek's concerns for the future of liberalism. Fellow Austrian anglophile and philosopher Karl Popper's (1945) *The Open Society and its Enemies* expressed many similar concerns (Mirowski n.d.) and Michael Polanyi, brother of Karl, was also a fellow traveller, both intellectually and in terms of the emigration from Vienna to England and then the US.

Hayek and other proponents of this recrudescant liberalism and its anti-collectivist sentiment such as Lippmann, von Mises, Rustow and a growing band of influential thinkers and writers, academics, journalists, business people and politicians, were active in driving the neoliberal project ahead. The movement which began in Paris at the Colloque Walter Lippmann re-grouped after the war at a conference in Mont Pelerin. This conference gave its name to the society which would take the ideas of neoliberalism onto the world stage and within a few decades, into the conventional wisdom of the governing class and prevailing public opinion, The Mont Pelerin Society (MPS).

The founding statement of the society is worth quoting in full to further reveal some of the underlying philosophical assumptions and political objectives in the language and style of those who proposed them:

The central values of civilization are in danger. Over large stretches of the earth's surface the essential conditions of human dignity and freedom have already disappeared. In others they are under constant menace from the development of current tendencies of policy. The position of the individual and the voluntary group are progressively undermined by extensions of arbitrary power. Even that most precious possession of Western Man, freedom of thought and expression, is threatened by the spread of creeds which, claiming the privilege of tolerance when in the position of a minority, seek only to establish a position of power in which they can suppress and obliterate all views but their own.

The group holds that these developments have been fostered by the growth of a view of history which denies all absolute moral standards and by the growth of theories which question the desirability of the rule of law. It holds further that they have been fostered by a decline of belief in private property and the competitive market; for without the diffused power and initiative associated with these institutions it is difficult to imagine a society in which freedom may be effectively preserved.

Believing that what is essentially an ideological movement must be met by intellectual argument and the reassertion of valid ideals, the group, having made a preliminary exploration of the ground, is of the opinion that further study is desirable inter alia in regard to the following matters:

- The analysis and exploration of the nature of the present crisis so as to bring home to others its essential moral and economic origins.
- The redefinition of the functions of the state so as to distinguish more clearly between the totalitarian and the liberal order.

- Methods of re-establishing the rule of law and of assuring its development in such manner that individuals and groups are not in a position to encroach upon the freedom of others and private rights are not allowed to become a basis of predatory power.
- The possibility of establishing minimum standards by means not inimical to initiative and functioning of the market.
- Methods of combating the misuse of history for the furtherance of creeds hostile liberty.
- The problem of the creation of an international order conducive to the safeguarding of peace and liberty and permitting the establishment of harmonious international economic relations.

(Schneider 2003: 66-67)

We can see from this statement that the reinvention of liberalism was at the very heart of the thinking behind the MPS. Its principal aim was to rescue liberalism from the collectivist ideals which had come to dominate that school of thought. As I have suggested, this was not, as some have suggested, a simple return to the nineteenth century *laissez faire* liberalism but a more complex reinvention and philosophical reworking of the liberal tradition. Many of the most influential political thinkers and economists of the interwar years would have regarded themselves as unquestionably liberal,¹⁰¹ yet proposed an institutional and intellectual framework that was largely collectivist. Hayek and the Mont Pelerin liberals were constructing a false dichotomy between collectivism and liberalism which failed to recognise the elements of liberalism that required some government intervention. Through the 1950s and 60s they rejected the possibility, demonstrated by the democratic advances made in both the US and Western Europe, that a social liberal mixed

¹⁰¹ Keynes was a member of the liberal party and although Hayek was sceptical of his liberalism, stating that: "Keynes believed that he was fundamentally still a classical English liberal and wasn't quite aware of how far he had moved away from it. His basic ideas were still those of individual freedom. He did not think systematically enough to see the conflicts." Hazlett, T. (1977 and 1992). *The Road from Serfdom*. Reason Magazine, July. <http://reason.com/archives/1992/07/01/the-road-from-serfdom/singlepage> Accessed on 20/5/09.

economy was both domestically sustainable and compatible with international arrangements to promote trade and investment.

The MPS, according to historian and former president of the society:

can be best described as a voluntary association of like-minded people who have more than an ordinary attachment to the idea of a free society and the conviction that ideas ultimately determine the way in which the world is seen and the methods by which it is organised. (Hartwell 1995: 24)

The importance attached to ideas and their promulgation is here shown to be an early priority of the MPS. Not just ideas about the present and future but how the writing of history can be used as a device to shape the current and future order. As Orwell famously noted: “Those who control the present, control the past and those who control the past control the future”. For the Mont Pelerin neoliberals, intellectuals and their links with and influence upon governing classes were central to the project to de-collectivise the dominant discourse of liberalism. According to Hayek, the most crucial aspect of the struggle to establish neoliberal ideas was the “free acceptance or rejection of ideas of the governing groups of our time” (1967: 147). For Hayek then, ideas were a more important factor than interests in understanding the ebb and flow of power in history world politics. He recognised that “[w]hat to the contemporary observer appears as the battle of interests has indeed often been decided long before in a clash of ideas confined to narrow circles” (1967: 179). What the Mont Pelerin liberals were engaged in then was what Gramsci referred to as a ‘war of position’ whereby their ideas would percolate through the governing classes and corporate elites until such a time when the necessary critical mass was reached and history became ripe for transformation.

If the crisis is deep – ‘organic’ – these efforts cannot be merely defensive. They will be formative: aiming at a new balance of forces, the emergence of new elements, the attempt to put together a new

‘historic bloc’, new political configurations and ‘philosophies’, a profound restructuring of the state and the ideological discourses which construct the crisis and represent it as it is ‘lived’ as a practical reality: new programmes and policies, pointing to a new result, a new sort of ‘settlement’ – ‘within certain limits’. These new elements do not emerge: they have to be constructed. Political and ideological work is required to disarticulate the old formations and to rework their elements into new ones. (Hall 1983: 23)

A War of Manoeuvre: Neoliberalization and the Demise of Bretton Woods

By the end of WWII a general consensus had emerged among the western powers as they moved toward victory that some form of collectivist state planning and international organisation would be desirable to secure the peace. In the years which followed WWII then, neoliberalism and its ideologues would remain on the margins, but worked consistently to get their ideas into policymaking circles. Meanwhile, the Keynesian prescription for domestic economic management was extended into the international sphere in the form of the Bretton Woods system of fixed but flexible exchange rates. This system would regulate international finance in order to prevent the kind of short-term capital flows which had destabilised the interwar period. In the words of the then US treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, a central aim of the system was “to drive the usurious money lenders from the temple of international finance” (in Gardner 1981: 76).

Despite the apparent stability of the first decades of the Bretton Woods system, a range of complicating factors and processes combined to de-stabilise that system culminating in the purported crisis of the 1970s. The system had been underwritten by the economic and political and military might of the USA. The Dollar served as a reserve currency to which other currencies would be pegged and the Dollar in turn would be convertible into gold at a rate of \$35 per ounce.

As the power of the US declined relative to the rest of the world, debtor countries became worried about the ability of the Federal Reserve to convert all the dollars in the global economy into gold.

If any single point or event can be said to mark the actual beginning of neoliberalization, the decision taken by US president Richard Nixon to abandon the gold standard and shift to an international system of floating exchange rates would be a contender. It has been suggested that Nixon had little choice in the matter but whatever the stimulus, this move provided a clear opportunity for the neoliberals to shift to a war of movement from its war of position. At the same time the abandonment of fixed exchange rate left the door wide open for currency speculation and a range of other financial practices which were expanding exponentially as a result of rapid developments in information and communications technology.

Despite the significance of this act, this second 'great transformation' (Blyth 2002: 4-5) was as much a result of growing unease regarding the spreading and deepening of democratic forms. The process of decolonisation had led many in the newly emerging developing world to call for a New International Economic Order with fairer terms of trade and an end to the domination of the global south by a handful of formerly colonial powers. Within those powerful countries, significant unrest and further democratic demands were making governments and powerful elites distinctly uncomfortable. A (1975) report to the Trilateral Commission spoke of a 'crisis of democracy' in the west and suggested many aspects of the crisis stemmed from an excess of democracy (129). The turn to neoliberal ideas then was not simply a response to a supposed economic crisis of Keynesian demand management toward monetarism but should be regarded as more of a political response to the extending reach and appeal of democratic governance.

So neoliberalism is not the same as globalisation, nor was it by any means a cause of globalisation. Neoliberalism was merely a set of radical ideas waiting in the wings as the post-war economic and geopolitical order began to unravel amid the turbulent political events and cultural currents of the

late 1960s and early 70s. It had spent decades on the margins, refining its arguments, building resources and developing networks, foundations and thinktanks.

The End of History?

Perhaps the high tide of neoliberal practice came in the aftermath of the historical watershed of a collapsing Soviet Union. Liberalism in general and neoliberalism as the dominant strain of that gained much credibility as a result of these rather unexpected and rapidly evolving events and processes. Commentators and politicians of the new right on both sides of the Atlantic saw this as further incontrovertible evidence that alternatives to a liberal democratic capitalist world order were no longer realistically conceivable (Fukuyama 1989, 1992; Kumar 1992). What is more interesting is the process which followed

As the apparatus of state socialism in the USSR withered in the face of haemorrhaging populations in Eastern Europe in the short term, coming largely as a result of more long term processes of cultural and political penetration, through increasingly widespread forms of mass communications media, of (neo)liberal ideology. I bracket 'neo' here as much of the more persuasive and powerful aspects of this ideology were those which neoliberalism has curtailed in practice. That these 'civil' and individual aspects of enlightenment 'rights' had been sacrificed in the face of a predominant concern with social and collective rights in that system, made the ideals of liberalism seem perhaps all the more appealing to the disenfranchised masses east of the Iron Curtain. Whatever the original appeal, the end of the Cold War has secured neoliberalism as the globally dominant paradigm by which to organise politics and the state. It has secured for itself the status of a normalized discourse with few challengers to its ideological supremacy. In order to understand

how it maintains that dominance, some attention must be paid to the way in which it respond to the criticisms of those who recognise the democratic deficit in neoliberal thought and practice.

In the next section I examine neoliberalism as a largely normalised discourse which must sustain its dominance through certain representations of anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist resistance. Anti-capitalist and anti-corporate resistance is a relatively recent aspect of resistance in the UK at least, coming in part from radical environmentalism and with some longer traditions in socialist politics. Previous anti-corporate activism on the traditional left had occurred almost exclusively through the trade union movement and, as until the early eighties, these were then confrontations with government as much of the fundamental industrial infrastructure was in public ownership. Trade unionism is not generally directly anti-corporate in that it requires corporate institutions to thrive in order to improve conditions and rewards for workers. Such political resistance now is a rather different form of thought and practice than in previous incarnations.

Part two – A critical discourse analysis: normalising neoliberalism

The previous chapter (six) attempted to show how discourse analysis, informed by some of the insights of Marxism, post-structuralism and social constructivism, provides a particularly suitable methodology for an examination of contemporary political and ideological struggles over the relative merits, costs and supposed benefits of neoliberal globalisation. Building upon the first part of this chapter, which has outlined the historical emergence of a neoliberal ideology in tandem with the emergence of a dominant transnational capitalist class, the purpose of part two then is to provide a critical discourse analysis of late capitalism through a close and critical examination of the discourses of neoliberal globalisation as it has been represented in the world famous business and current affairs journal, *The Economist*.

What remains then, is to interrogate more narrowly the discourses of neoliberalism and late capitalism with a view to revealing some of the ways in which it represents, reproduces and in part constitutes the social and political institutions of neoliberalism. We can find examples of these discourses in an almost infinite number of locations. I focus here on just one, *The Economist*, and focus on a particular aspect of neoliberal discourse, its normalisation and purported necessity. By this I mean the particular ways in which *The Economist* represents those agents and groups which might attempt to oppose or resist neoliberal processes and institutions of globalisation. Specifically, I refer to *The Economist's* representations of democratically elected institutions of government, particularly where these stand in the way of deregulation and privatisation and to non-state agents and new social movements who more explicitly oppose and protest neoliberal

globalisation.¹⁰² These groups and movements, which I have so far refereed to variously as counter-hegemonic, counter-capitalist or alter-globalist, are in general referred to in *The Economist* under the term 'anti-globalisation'.

I do not suggest that *The Economist* will provide an adequate account by itself own for a full understanding of neoliberal discourse and ideology, it is merely one important source of discourse among many which would provide interesting and useful insights into the maintenance of neoliberal hegemony. A discourse analysis of forms of marketing and advertising, interviews with CEO's, documentation from global economic institutions, thinktank outputs (e.g. The Adam Smith Institute, Institute for Economic Ideas, Mont Pelerin Society etcetera), statements of corporate social responsibility, government documents of various kinds would all reveal important aspects of neoliberal ideology and represent fruitful alternative avenues for further enquiry. The abundance of neoliberal discourse is both part of its strength and evidence of its dominance.

The period of analysis

The texts analysed were extracted from a period ranging from 1996 to 2003. This period is significant and interesting for a number of reasons. It represents perhaps the high water mark of globalisation and neoliberal dominance, the so-called 'Washington Consensus'¹⁰³ but also a period

¹⁰² For a discussion and analysis of these various groups see: Starr (2000, 2005); Fischer and Ponniah (eds.) (2003); Notes from nowhere (2003); Smith (2008). For accounts of opposition to globalisation more generally see Held and McGrew (2003); Stiglitz (2002).

¹⁰³ Alongside Joseph Stiglitz, Noam Chomsky (1999) is perhaps best known for this phrase, using it to link neoliberalism with US imperial power in his book *Profit over People*. It was originally coined in 1989 by John Williamson to indicate the link between the Washington based institutions of the IMF and World Bank and a set of global policies designed to promote trade and foreign direct investment. The policies he identified included a redirection of public expenditure priorities toward fields offering both high economic returns and the potential to improve income distribution, eg. primary health care, primary education, and infrastructure; tax reform (to lower marginal rates and broaden the tax base); interest rate liberalization; a competitive exchange rate; trade liberalization; liberalization of inflows of foreign direct investment;

when serious questions and increasingly widespread doubts were beginning to be voiced regarding the supposed benefits and efficacy of neoliberal political economic policies for state and global institutions. These doubts were the result of growing evidence that such policies appeared to continue to benefit the rich largely at the expense of the poor, both within and between countries and regions of the world. Also, growing concerns over the ecological sustainability of the economic growth model which defined the very essence of the neoliberal project led increasing numbers to suspect the sustainability of a programme of unlimited economic growth. In addition, the Asian financial crisis of 1998 and the subsequent global contagion were interpreted by many as evidence of the dangerous instability and precarity of such neoliberal models of global economic governance (Haggard 2000; Noble and Ravenhill 2000; Goldstein 1998).

Furthermore, in the wake of the attacks of September the eleventh, some had pronounced the 'end of globalisation'. Such claims came not only from critics of globalisation but also from its neoliberal advocates. For example, an editorial comment by the Chief Economist of Morgan Stanley suggested that the increased costs of international production and trade subsequent to 9/11 might result in 'the world turning its back on globalization,' and that the terrorist attacks and their aftermath 'may bring about its demise' (Kobrin n.d.). This resonates with the advice of George Bush to the American people after the attacks to 'go out and shop' (Schanberg 2004) in recognition of the threat to the neoliberal order presented by that shocking event imbued with such global resonance. In fact, it might be argued that while certainly a different historical track was taken than would otherwise have been the case, the neoliberal course of globalisation ran on much as before but with the added neo-conservative twist of the global war on terror which in time became incorporated as simply

privatization, deregulation (to abolish barriers to entry and exit) and secure property rights. See <http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidtrade/issues/washington.htm>

another element of the neoliberal capitalist world order and a profitable excursion for the already wealthy and powerful.

Indeed, before 9/11 by far the most numerous and significant debates in global politics were those surrounding globalisation and resistance. It is now difficult to recall in the wake of that event and the subsequent barbarous wars on terror just how salient these issues were on the global political agenda and the popular press. Around that time, *The Economist* was preparing a long survey addressing exactly those themes which was suspended indefinitely. The London *Financial Times* had also begun a series of articles called 'Globalisations Children Strike Back' dedicated to the so-called 'movement of movements', the first part and only one published was entitled: 'The Mosquitoes begin to Swarm' and described the movement thus:

It is wide in its tactics and ambitions, violent and revolutionary on the edges, peaceful and reformist in the main. It rushes in often contradictory directions, anti-corporate and entrepreneurial, anarchist and nostalgic, technophobe and futuristic, revolutionary and conservative all at the same time. It does not have one source. Many tributaries have swollen counter-capitalism: the anti-apartheid movement, the campaigns against US intervention in Central America, environmentalism, the emergence of protest movements in the Third World, famine relief in Africa, the Asian financial crisis, human rights protection, Acid House raves in Europe, road rallies organized by Reclaim the Streets and hip-hop music in the US. (Harding 2001)

The attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon that same day put paid to that series of articles and a new set of political priorities dominated the popular press and hence the public consciousness. Not until deep into the 2008 crisis and subsequent global depression did a similar level of popular resistance to neoliberal globalisation begin to emerge again, both in the streets and in the popular press. After 9/11, the movement of movements was side-lined, but in the months leading up to that disaster, they were at the forefront of *The Economist's* discussions of the merits

and necessity of globalisation. Much of the focus below is on how *The Economist* has (mis)represented these movements and protests. Analysis of these representations identifies some of the ways resistance is delegitimised and highlights the importance of this process for maintaining the dominance of the late capitalist neoliberal discourse of globalisation.

About The Economist

First published in 1843, *The Economist* was designed from the outset to be an advocate of free trade and was initially set up to challenge the growing calls for regulation and trade protectionism of the era and in particular the newly introduced corn laws (repealed just three years later in 1846). From the very start then, *The Economist's* focus has largely been upon the tensions between government intervention and protectionism and the promotion of markets and free trade, tensions which remain at the very core of debates over globalisation today. As shown earlier in the chapter, *The Economist* has not always been devoted to a neoclassical paradigm of economics as characterised by the neoliberal model. As Brown and Lauder note, it has in fact been more of a “bellweather of economic fashion” (2001: 77). It should be noted then that the argument here is not that *The Economist* itself determines or even reflects the thought process and consciousness of *all* its readers, although it may help to do so in some cases. I suggest only that it is an interesting source for a case study on particular aspects of neoliberal ideology and how they are ‘discursified’ in the current historico-ideological juncture.

It is important to remember that *The Economist* is now not only a popular journal, but increasingly wields its heavy influence through many other media forms, channels and outlets, particularly as a result of the new media opportunities afforded by the internet. *The Economist.com* includes a vast array of searchable comment and analysis under a number of headings. Its ‘Global Agenda’

conference provides yet another forum for the gathering of like minds, the collaboration and consolidation of transnational classes and business elites. In addition, an expanding and regularly updated collection of 'Country Briefings' includes articles, brief histories, political forecasts and socio-economic statistics, market and currency updates, newswires and links on over 60 countries (<http://www.economist.com/countries>). A 'Cities Guide' (<http://www.economist.com/cities>) provides a focus on cities as much as countries demonstrates *The Economist's* recognition of the development of 'global cities' as key central organisational nodes for globalisation and capital expansion and entrenchment—capitalism is itself a profoundly urbanising phenomenon and global cities are emerging as political actors in their own right alongside nation states. It is described on the website as 'insider information for the business traveller on major destinations around the world.' The 'Global Executive' section provides articles, interviews and book reviews on management thinking and business education (<http://www.economist.com/business/globalexecutive>).

While these newer elements of *The Economist's* output will not form a major part of this study, their nature gives us some clues about the kinds of knowledge dissemination and entrenchment that are vital for promoting and facilitating neoliberal globalisation and make *The Economist* an even more vital component of those processes. Seen with these new services to the neoliberal business class, *The Economist* appears to be more than just a journal then, it has become and arguably sees itself as a key institution of globalisation. Its 'Intelligence unit' provides resources 'to help executives make informed business decisions through dependable intelligence delivered online, in print, in customised research as well as through conferences and peer interchange' (<http://www.eiu.com/>). *The Economist* is the flagship journal and 'front of shop' publication for an expanding media empire under The Economist Group. This also includes a number of other paper publications including '*More Intelligent Life*', a glossy lifestyle/leisure magazine with longer, more cultural, historical and biographical articles and a heavy focus on high-end advertising of luxury

consumer goods and lifestyles for the super-rich cultural elite. These are also the business elites and high priests of capitalism, but of equal importance, *The Economist's* readership goes far beyond this group to a huge number of globally dispersed middle managers in the private, and what is left of the public, sector. With its unusual ownership (50% owned by the FT group and 50% by private investors including the Rothschilds), *The Economist* has long been relatively immune from the cuts that other publications suffer during economic downturns. It is the only large circulation publication not to have seen its print edition fall in numbers with the advent of electronic media. Indeed, its paper circulation has increased significantly in recent years.

Every week we take readers from around the world on a tour of business, politics and culture. The Economist sells nearly 1.5m copies a week, and the number keeps rising. What's more, our readers are Ideas People. People who are united not by age or demographics, but by how they think and how they view the world. (<http://www.economistgroupmedia.com/planning-tools/circulation/>)

The above marketing blurb also expresses quite clearly how *The Economist* regards itself in a leadership role in which readers are 'taken' into the world of business politics and culture. A reference to its readership as 'Ideas People' suggests a recognition and celebration of the ideological influence of its readership and the importance of ideas in the world more generally. This is in addition to a more commercial function to appeal to readers who likely consider themselves to be 'ideas people'. Indeed, who would not wish to be deemed as such? It is worth recalling the importance afforded to ideas and their dissemination by economists by noting the advice given to Antony Fisher by Hayek that "the decisive influence in the battle of ideas and policy was wielded by intellectuals whom he characterised as the 'second-hand dealers in ideas'" (quoted in Cockett 1995: 123). Additionally, Hayek's ideological opposite number, Keynes, was in considerable agreement on the importance of ideas.

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. (Keynes 1936: 383)

The Economist is not only read widely by business elites and senior managers, the movers and shakers of capitalism, but also by many professionals and also academics, perhaps especially those teaching and researching in the fields of Politics IR/IPE, Business and Economics. Indeed, it should be remembered that the power of *The Economist* is derived from its reputation for high quality journalism which often breaks into research based analysis. As a result, the paper now claims a worldwide circulation of 1.6 million, about one fifth in the UK,¹⁰⁴ making it one of the most widely read weekly current affairs journals anywhere in the world with a distribution in every single country of the world. *The Economist* has built for itself a reputation as being balanced, even-handed and traditionally 'liberal'. This is linked to, and goes some way to help explain, its readership among many academics who also regard themselves as rational and objective observers of the world. It has a long history and tradition as the primary international journal of business and commercial elites. The content of the journal is interesting for discourse analysis due partly to the way it is structured so as to combine editorials, reportage and a substantial amount of advertising and marketing. Such a range of semiosis provides fertile ground for examinations of intertextuality. However, the analysis below is predominantly (but not exclusively) from the written editorial content. The editorial style is also interesting due to the widespread practice of anonymous columnists and commentators and can be seen to add to the rhetorical power of *The Economist*. It presents a further impression of objectivity and disassociation from particular individual

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.economistgroup.com/AboutTheGroup/cfo.html>

perspectives, opinions or viewpoints and bestows the paper with its (I hope to show, undeserved) dispassionate, neutral and balanced credentials.

Any one of these factors would make *The Economist* an interesting and valuable object of analysis. Their combination makes it an especially important and potentially fruitful source for a critical discourse analysis of neoliberalism. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, it has already been subjected to this type of close reading from a feminist perspective by Charlotte Hooper (2001). That excellent study focused primarily on the discursive links between representations of capitalist globalisation, discourses of masculinity and dominant perspectives in the academic field of IR. This study will analyse *The Economist's* shifting representations of globalisation in light of the increasing salience of opposition and resistance to those processes. In this way I hope to show that a close and critical discourse analysis of some selected articles from *The Economist* betray its claims to balance and supposed objectivity and in fact demonstrate a strong political bias in that journal, exposing it as a powerful discursive agent for the neoliberal project of globalisation.

The following analysis will examine more closely the way in which the reportage and criticism of opposition and resistance to neoliberal globalization can be highlighted in order to further demonstrate the ways in which knowledge about global politics have become entrenched in a particular hegemonic discourse of globalization. I re-iterate that the period which marks the major object of analysis (1996-2003) is chosen as it incorporates the emergence of a political movement (of movements) which has come to be widely (mis)labelled as 'anti-globalisation'.

The texts selected have been chosen due to their implicit and explicit reference to globalization and the rise of a global justice movement that is more often referred to and recognised as anti-corporate, anti-capitalist or anti-globalisation. The defining characteristic of this movement is that it has begun to understand and articulate the many connections between a range of apparently disparate and unconnected issues and the construction of a globally oriented neoliberal regime.

This regime has itself adopted and been ascribed many labels, from 'Washington consensus' (see Stiglitz 2002; Chomsky 1999) to an American or global 'Empire' (Hardt and Negri 2000; Panitch and Gindin 2004).

Augmented consensus? The shift to a more conciliatory tone

It is interesting to contrast the editorial/textual tone of *The Economist* around the beginning of the 21st century to that of the early/mid-1990's. Prior to a number of crises and setbacks in the mid/late nineties to the neoliberal project of a global free market *The Economist* had adopted a more strident and at times even quite aggressive tone. To suggest a crisis of confidence would be to overstate the case but the 'red in tooth and claw' language of globalisation exemplified by such comments as the following:

It would be pointless to deny that globalization is causing large changes in every society. It is also clear that such influences act on different cultures differently, enforcing a kind of natural selection between those cultures which rise to the challenge and those which do not. (*The Economist* 1996: 30)

Such a bold and strident tone is not uncommon during this period but is less in evidence during more recent years as the inevitable fallout from deregulation became more widespread and visible. Adopting such a rather extreme Darwinian line, *The Economist* here betrays a rather blatant dismissal of cultural diversity as insignificant, even problematic, with respect to the inexorable processes of neoliberal globalization. The article from which the above text is drawn, entitled 'Cultural Explanations', holds that culture, which according to *The Economist* seems puzzlingly divorced from ideology, is an insignificant factor in socio-economic explanations. The article concludes that "[w]hile culture may continue to exercise an important influence on both countries

and individuals, it has not suddenly become more important than, say, governments or impersonal economic forces” (ibid.: 1996: 30). An interesting point here then is the contrast of “impersonal economic forces” (i.e. supposedly spontaneous market mechanisms) which are assumed to be somehow devoid of the unpredictabilities of human behaviour, or ‘culture’. No such similar qualification is provided for governments either which, as I will show below, are a common target of criticism for *The Economist* as they are often assumed to be inconvenient obstacles to neoliberal governance, whereas the market makes good, predictable, rational decisions on a simple and rational calculation of supply and demand. Without recognizing any of the obvious connections or contradictions, the article goes on to distinguish culture from the even more deplorable concept of ‘ideology’, something which appears to *The Economist* to be mysteriously linked here only with Cold War rivalry and as such consigned to the dustbin of history, a familiar liberal take on ideology as only of *historical* significance. It continues: “Nor does it [culture] play the all-embracing and defining role that ideology played during the Cold War. Much of its influence is secondary, i.e., it comes about partly as a reaction to the “knowledge era” (ibid.: 1996: 30). Culture and ideology, for *The Economist* here then, are merely problematic ‘epiphenomena’.

As a result of this dismissal of culture as merely a kind of temporary and misguided irrational response to irresistible forces, *The Economist* must assume that “[w]ithin the overall mix of what influences people’s behaviour culture’s role may well be declining, rather than rising, squeezed between the greedy expansion of government on one side and globalization on the other” (ibid.: 1996: 30). Such a position on the role of culture is somewhat harder to sustain in the light of the intervening ten years where cultural considerations have come to the political and economic fore in a number of ways and in no uncertain manner (Best and Paterson 2010). Capitalist practices now increasingly recognize the importance of cultural sensitivity and adaptability according to cultural difference, although the seemingly inevitable outcome of this adaptability will be to slowly smooth out and erode that problematic diversity rather than to simply deny its very existence.

Resistance and 'terror'

In the post 9/11 context, there appears to be the beginnings of a different way of talking about resistance, with the increasing tendency to speak of resistance in terms of terror, (e.g. guerrilla attacks on US occupying forces in Iraq) it might even be possible to identify a new discursive formation in which resistance is represented as far more destructive and dangerous. This was beginning to take shape even before 9/11. Consider for example this closing paragraph to an article on the Genoa summit:

And the rioting in Genoa, though it was not due only to the Italians, may well have deep consequences in the country. The slogans, the letter bombs, the violent tactics and much of the indulgent comment of the intelligentsia remind many Italians of what happened in the 1970's. What began then with angry slogans against multi-national companies evolved into street clashes and ended in terrorism, which left many dead and deep political scars. This must not happen again. (*The Economist* 2001a: 40)

The title of the article: 'Picking up the pieces' also connotes and emphasises the destructive aspect of the protest and *The Economist* and its readers are left with the task of repairing the valuable consensus which has been broken by the irrational and dangerous protesters.

While previously, *The Economist's* editorial line on globalisation was that it was unquestionable and irresistible, during the late 1990's this shifted somewhat toward a more explanatory and almost apologetic tone. More recently however, the tendency seems to be rather than simply dismiss any doubts about the appropriateness of the grand global venture, to argue that it really is for the good of all in the end, and despite its imperfect nature, it remains a necessary if sometime and for some people uncomfortable – the medicine must simply be taken. In this line of representation then,

there are traces of the defensive and cautious admissions of imperfection but no other course is considered as plausible or permissible.

This resonates with some of the work of those theorising the emergence and activity of a Transnational Capitalist Class who argue the case that hegemony is not perpetuated without conscious and concerted action on the part of the dominant class. A close reading of *The Economist* since the later 1990's reveals some evidence of what Leslie Sklair refers to as the "siege mentality" of global capitalism and the TCC (Sklair 1999:23). This mentality is increasingly discernible in *The Economist* in phrases such as: "The dismal science is suddenly sexy [...] People who used to be regarded as pen pushing bureaucrats have become *warriors in the struggle between the forces of global capital and the forces of something-or-other*" (*The Economist* 2001: 16 my emphasis). The quote combines both an explicit acknowledgement of growing opposition with a more subtle dismissal of that opposition. The quote displays a clear example of the dominant 'inside' and the contingent 'outside'. Described nevertheless as a force, the main point is to suggest that they do not stand for anything and are thus represented as incoherent, implausible, dis-organised etcetera.

Further evidence is contained partly within an attempt to represent those critical of globalisation (and its constitutive elements of privatisation, liberalisation and free trade) as being misguided and naïve in their aims. Their goals are often represented in *The Economist* as being threatened by their means.

It is possible to further illustrate this move with reference to a cover story which appeared shortly after the protests at meeting of the WTO in Seattle in 1999. The cover of the journal shows a close up of a small child (intimating what is perhaps the ultimate image of innocence and vulnerability) behooded in rags and staring intently (pleadingly?) at the camera. It is captioned: 'The real losers from Seattle'.



The meanings of the picture alone may of course be somewhat ambiguous, however, as demonstrated by Barthes (1977), it is the caption which selects the one out of the many possible meanings for the image and fixes it with text (see also Hall 1972). The meaning of the photograph does not lie exclusively in the image but in the careful and deliberate conjunction of the image and text. The suggestion then, is that the protestors themselves might be somehow responsible for the plight of the destitute and famine stricken child. As if the Seattle talks (and subsequent gatherings of the transnational neoliberal political classes) had been allowed to proceed unmolested then this child, and those her image is given to represent, would have stood more chance of being lifted from that situation and spared their suffering.

The Economist only rarely enlists the 'the poor' to its noble cause. It may seem churlish to suggest that something must be amiss when it does, but precious little evidence is produced here to support

its sudden bout of humanitarian concern. The accompanying text goes on to criticise the Indian governments, India, “home of *our* cover child” (1999:15 my emphasis), is poor only because “for four decades it pursued policies of socialist anti-globalization”(ibid.: 15). Thankfully for *The Economist* it has finally come to its senses and “begun to embrace globalization, gradually opening itself up to the world. Finally, its economic growth rate, and with it the welfare and prospects of the poor, has begun to pick up. The process has barely begun, but hopes are high” (ibid.: 15). The familiar promise of ‘more jam tomorrow’ seems to be the basic solution. Nothing is said of the fact that India weathered the storm of the Asian financial crisis better than most of its neighbours and other developing countries due to its apparently misery inducing “socialist anti-globalisation” (ibid.:15). In fact the years since India began de-regulating its state and globalising its economy have seen consistent grinding poverty, rapidly increasing inequality and rising levels of social unrest (Pal and Ghosh 2007).

Reports in *The Economist* of later meetings which collapsed as a result of resistance and demonstrations both inside and outside the talks continue this theme of blaming the protestors for harming those which they claim to represent. In a cover story response to the collapse of the Cancun WTO talks, *The Economist* seethed:

"VICTORY to the people," cheered a press release from a globophobic activist group, Food First, after the world trade talks broke down in Cancún on September 14th. This delight is widely shared among developing-country advocates and even among many poor-country governments. Great news from Cancún? What scandalous rubbish. The failure sprang not from principle, nor even from intelligent calculation, but from cynicism, delusion and incompetence. It is going to leave most people in the world worse off--and, without a doubt, those who will suffer worst are the world's poor. (2003: 11-12)

Here again, any substantial questioning of the forms which global economic governance takes is presented as “globophobia” born of a supposed simple lack of understanding the ‘truth’ and inevitability of neoliberal globalisation. To be against the neoliberal agenda is assumed to be against any form of globalisation. This kind of labelling or scripting of criticism is a constant and recurring theme in the discourse. It is most notable in the repeated use of the pre-fix ‘anti’ which reinforces a representation of resistance as defined by its negativity and that it’s only identity or coherence is that it is ‘against’ globalisation but not ‘for’ anything in particular, as quoted above in the term “the forces of something-or-other” (*The Economist* 2001:16).

The strategy of 'anti' labelling

The Economist relies heavily upon the terms anti-globalisation and anti-capitalism as convenient umbrella terms in an attempt to de-legitimise a democratic movement that is marked by its valuable diversity of ends and means and a distinctly global understanding of politics and economics. While this may be merely a convenient shorthand, labelling in such a way bolsters the claim that such opposition is lacking in coherent alternatives to the current order, harking back to the famous refrain of the UK Thatcher government in response to critics of its own *laissez-faire* economic policies 'There is no alternative (TINA)'.

Perhaps unsurprisingly then, there is little attempt to give voice to the protestors in such a way as to allow them to state common objectives such as equality, social justice, democracy and ecological sustainability. Where such space is set aside those who *are* quoted are employed in the task of reinforcing negative representations. For instance, in an article entitled ‘The New Trade War’, the unlikely figure of Pat Buchanan is singled out to speak on behalf of the protestors. *The Economist* sees nothing strange in such a choice of spokesperson for global justice:

Unsurprisingly, Pat Buchanan, a conservative protectionist demagogue...who was also in Seattle this week revelled in the controversy. "There is something higher than commerce" he declared. "It's called country, and we're joining the battle in Seattle to ensure that someone still stands for ours." (The Economist 1999:55)

This association is a deliberate tactic to lump left progressives together with nationalist conservatives. This corresponds with the general assumptions of neoliberals since Hayek that all forms of collectivism are grouped together as working against liberty and therefore unified in their destructive and dangerous irrational anti-democratic tendencies.

Many in the global justice movement in fact recognize the necessity of some alternative form of globalisation rather than retreating to nationalist politics but criticize the capturing of this process by the neoliberal political project as a purely capitalist framework. They themselves often have scant sympathy for the modern capitalist state as a political institution which might adequately meet the needs of the majority world. As we have seen, the state is deeply and irretrievably implicated in the promotion and maintenance of globalisation. This is a fact which *The Economist* rarely recognises and certainly not in explicit fashion. States, governments and politicians are essentially obstacles to the free movement of capital and liberty in general unless they are deliberately engaged in practices and processes of de-regulation, privatisation, de-nationalisation or somehow engaged in foreign policy which extends free trade and the invisible hand of the market worldwide. Indeed the crucial role of the state, in particular the SIACS, in these struggles forms a central element of the critical debates within the global justice movement. These movements are aware of the close proximity of economic and political power which is held apart in the neoliberal discourse of *The Economist*.

Such associations deliberately and effectively obscure the progressive and increasingly transnational nature of the majority of opposition to the WTO and associated organisations,

attempting to connect their aims with the parochial and paternalistic nation-state. The clear strategy is to represent resistance as both conservative and regressive. Implicit in this process is the construction and maintenance of binary oppositions, one is either committed to a global neoliberal ideology and its constituent elements of private power, unregulated trade and finance and the minimal residual state, or one is devoutly protectionist, luddite, and committed to 'irrational' or delusional means of attaining political and economic objectives. As a result the dominant discourse closes off space for dialogue and different perspectives.

Again, focusing on an individual with alleged 'anti-global' credentials, the book review of Naomi Klein's *Fences and Windows* links representations of irrationality with an infantile and heavily gendered mind-set and a range of discursive markers with which these are underscored. The 'review' which is much more of Klein than the actual work itself, is titled: 'Why Naomi Klein needs to grow up', a clue to what is to follow. Indeed, the reviewer judges that:

Klein has all the incoherence and self-righteous disgust of the alienated adolescent... She measures the growing pains of capitalist development not against real world alternatives but against a Disneyesque utopia... [She] is all aflutter over Subcommandante Marcos. (2002:70)

"all aflutter" is a term that would be inconceivable if the author of the book were not female. Here *The Economist* is clearly and openly objectifying Klein and mocking her as some giddy teenage girl with an infatuation for the 'brave soldier' (Marcos). In the process it is her gender which is under scrutiny, not so much the actual work itself. Or rather, Klein's gender, and of course her age, is used against the work under review. Reference to Disney also serves as an attempt to infantilise and therefore reduce the authority of the work which paints a view of globalisation different from the mainstream representation which must retain its own authority against any dissenting voice. The representation of infantilism and immaturity is underscored in the final sentences where, having rejected Klein's hardly ground-breaking or radical suggestions: that TNC's exert considerable

power over governments and individuals, the reviewer 'concedes' that "for an angry adolescent, she writes rather well. [...] What a pity she has turned her talents as a writer to a cause that can only harm the people she claims to care most about. But perhaps it's just a phase. (ibid.:70)

We could here be reminded of the kind of condescending reprimand that might be directed toward a wayward adolescent by the authoritative parent. 'She'll grow out of it when she calms down and understands'. This kind of trivializing and ridicule to which *The Economist* subjects those critical of neoliberal globalisation remains a major rhetorical device in an era of increasing uncertainty about the adequacy of global capitalist institutions to address the growing salience of inequality, injustice, economic crisis and ecological meltdown. The system only needs marginal tweaking or reform and remains the only game in town. As the voices of dissent grow in number and in volume such an approach is likely to form a major part of discourses which sustain that system.

In line with the emerging 'augmented Washington consensus' mentioned above, the editorial tone of *The Economist* increasingly demonstrates attention to, and some apparent discomfort with, the losers of globalisation who are becoming increasingly visible and vocal. However this appears to be largely a discursive strategy through which to undermine criticisms of capitalism and neoliberal globalisation which assumes that more growth and less government is the only viable solution to these problems which can no longer effectively be ignored, even by *The Economist*.

Governments as incompetent

Another key component of *The Economist's* neoliberal discourse then, is that it is widely critical of governments and as a corollary the regulatory institutions of states, even relatively democratic ones.¹⁰⁵ It is therefore an extremely good example of the type of discourse that Ian Douglas refers

¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the most substantively democratic states such as those in Scandinavia have been some of the last to capitulate to some form of the neoliberal model.

to in his (1997) *Globalisation and the Retreat of the State*, i.e. the discursive rendering of globalisation in the popular consciousness as an inevitable, inexorable and natural process. There is a representation of the state as anachronistic, incompetent and interfering in the natural and spontaneous order of the free market. This is usually carried out under the guise of referring to politicians in general rather than particular states by name although certain states regularly appear as exemplary bogeymen of protectionism. For example, Clueless in Seattle (The Economist 1999:19) presents the WTO agenda as threatened by governments and protesters alike:

It is hard to say which was worse--watching the militant dunces parade their ignorance through the streets of Seattle or listen to their lame brained governments respond to the "arguments".

No, take that back: the second was worse. At least the rioters had a good time. It was the politicians who made the biggest hash of things [...] France's trade minister says here is the proof that economics and politics cannot be kept apart: statism lives! (1999: 19)

France is a regular *bête noir* of *The Economist*. The combination of its considerable economic muscle and international political significance with a popular cultural suspicion of globalisation and neoliberalism marks it out as a significant obstacle to the free market model of globalisation and European Unification. More recently however, its traditions of resistance, effectively organised and active labour movements and large public sector provision have been gradually dismantled by these combined institutional processes and the ideas and discourses which underpin them.

In the aforementioned article about the demonstrations in Genoa, Italian Politicians are held equally to account for their failure to adequately protect the summit.

Predictably, the politicians, who—government and opposition alike—failed to foresee just how bad things would get, are now at each other's throat. [...] plainly the government misjudged the scale of the protest (2001a: 40).

It is the politicians of the left which unsurprisingly become marked out by the Economist as especially culpable for the failure of the summit.

Blame the police as it may, it was a centre-left government, in power until May—indeed, formally until June—that picked Genoa for the summit, and planned the event. But, after losing the election on May 13th, many left-wing politicians started to back the protesters' umbrella organisation, the Genoa Social Forum. (ibid.: 40)

Of course, the article soon returns to a more familiar denunciation of the protesters themselves, comparing the demonstrations to the activities of Italian far left groups in the 1970's and reminding the reader of the political violence which became associated with that era.¹⁰⁶ This consistent reference to the danger, violence and disorder represents an underlying fear of radical or revolutionary transformation. It seems to be both regarded as a distinct possibility and simultaneously dismissed as inconceivable.

Subsuming violence and ignorance

Perhaps the most consistent theme in the neoliberal discourse of *The Economist* and its representations of resistance is the repeated allusions made to the violent nature of alter-globalisations and global justice protests. Another binary opposition is erected whereby the disorder and chaos associated with demonstrations is placed in counter-position to the supposed order and safety and security provided by a neoliberal order of global free markets. The chaos of economic crisis and regular financial collapse is obscured by the over-representation of more overt

¹⁰⁶ Note again the reference to political terror campaigns of 1970's Italy in the quote on 'rioting in Genoa' illustrated on page 267 (from *The Economist* 2001a: 40).

and deliberate disorder, contestation and conflict which sometimes obtains at the meetings and summits of financial technocratic elites.

For all but the anarchists and sundry Marxists for whom worse means better, it was a disaster.

Last weekend's G8 summit in Genoa saw two days of violent riot and police reaction that left one rioter shot dead. (ibid.: 40)

In line with this tactic, the picture at the head of the article is of a single isolated protester framed by burning vehicles and smoking tear-gas grenades, bedecked in para-militaristic gas mask and wielding the ominous black flag of the anarchists. This is given as a representative image of the protests, not democratic and socially diverse mass participation, as was in fact the case, but signifying with dangerously narrow criminal anti-democratic elements re-emphasising the order/disorder binarism.

Indeed, a common theme of image-text representations demonstrated in these articles is to avoid pictures of crowds and stick to individuals or very small groups engaged in throwing missiles, setting light to property or even sometimes devoid of people completely in favour of dramatic imagery of smoke and fire. The suggestion appears to go along the lines of: 'this could be your stuff burning'. Images of seething masses such as those published in the more popular press and broadcast media, may prove too discomforting for the liberal business elite that constitutes much of *The Economist's* readership. (see also burning flag picture with article on Cancun 'WTO under fire' (2003:28).

The prevailing ignorant, violent and dangerous representation resonates strongly with domestic US trades unions stereotyping, highlighted by Mark Rupert, of "ignorant and inarticulate strong-arm thugs with underworld connections. On national television, President Clinton denounced labor's 'roughshod' and 'musclebound' tactics and the theme was picked up in the press" (Rupert 2000: 61). The portrayal of resistance as ignorance also entrenches and reinforces the managerial dominance and supposed economic technocratic 'expertise' of institutional capitalist elites. The

argument goes that violence is born of frustration at the lack of understanding of the intricacies of finance, trade and development economics. It is a tactic long deployed in professions such as law and medicine as well as a host of other 'disciplinary' institutions to privilege and entrench the power of dominant groups and institutionalised practices through the use of technocratic jargon. Part of the role of the unnecessary complexity of language in financial discourse is to maintain it as the realm of professional economists and to exclude lay interpretations which might expose the inherent contradictions of financial capitalism.

However, in addition, and in a sense perhaps contrasting these fear inducing representations discussed above, there is also a tendency to represent resistance as disorganised and ineffectual, in the words of Tony Blair "An anarchist's travelling circus going from summit to summit" (quoted in Graves 2001:22). In this discursive strategy the resisting subject is again belittled and trivialised in order to cast it as without import, strategy or meaningful direction. So, in order to deny the intellectual and practical validity of popular interventions at the summits of neoliberal global governance and to forestall any repetition of such inconvenient events it suggests less accessible and glamorous locations for multilateral trade talks:

Seattle and Gothenburg have a low-key marine charm as well as a reputation as hippy heaven. Advertising a summit in that sort of place is pure provocation to a bored anarchist in a bedsit in south London. The world is full of alternative locations guaranteed to discourage the soft-bellied young of today. (*The Economist* 2001:16)

Again, not so subtle representations of protestors as "the soft-bellied young" implies they are immature, middle-class, well-educated and state protected privileged who therefore have no right to question the system which creates the wealth which has both softened and enlightened them. Their stance is considered contradictory and incoherent as it is beyond the rationalist assumptions of *The Economist* that people would not resist on behalf of those less fortunate than themselves.

The more recent gatherings of the global financial elite have indeed opted for more far away and inaccessible destinations and the security measures employed to keep protestors at bay are extensive to say the least. The War on Terror has helped to foster a political climate which has heightened the security measures surrounding these summits to a military scale and more recent demonstrations have been far removed from the actual negotiations themselves.

Even articles that appear to show some genuine curiosity about the nature of protest and those involved such as one entitled 'Mayday, Mayday' reverts in the final paragraph to a familiar editorial line:

But the ragbag anti-capitalists are probably too disorganised to create real havoc, or to rank alongside the truly epoch-making protests that London has seen over the past few centuries. Farce is a likelier outcome than tragedy. (2001b: 36)

The softer line may also have something to do with this particular event (traditional Mayday demonstrations) being aimed more at the state than at global neoliberal institutional processes and arrangements promoting and driving globalisation such as the summits for the G8 and the WTO. These are perhaps not so much then 'anti-globalisers' but the yet more farcical 'anti-capitalists'. Their politics is directed at state structures which also sometimes represent an inconvenience to the interests of global finance capital and transnational elites. In this instance the resistance is considered somehow more credible and legitimate when it is turned towards an institution of mutual suspicion. However, anti-capitalists appear more overtly aware of the role of the British state in the processes of neoliberal global governance. For them it is not an independent actor but deeply implicated in the global capitalist order.

More interestingly here however, is the thinly veiled allusion to Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*. The final sentence of the article is a reworking of the classic and much rehearsed quote from the opening lines of the *Brumaire* where Marx is himself drawing upon Hegel's observation that "all the

great events and characters of world history occur twice". To this Marx adds "the first time as high tragedy, the second time as low farce" (Marx 1851[1977]: 300). *The Economist* is demonstrating a familiarity tinged with an easy contempt for the intellectual resources of its assumed critics and detractors, many of whom retain a view of politics and economics inspired by the writings of Marx and Engels. Perhaps it is intended as a reminder to socialist sympathisers that the tragedy of 20th century communism is only matched by the supposedly farcical notion that socialism might still hold an appeal.

I think there appears to be some discernible weaknesses displayed in *The Economist's* representations of globalisation and resistance (and neo-liberal discourse more generally) marked by an apparent confusion as to whether Global Justice Movements are irrational, violent and dangerous or ignorant infantile and insignificant. Both kinds of representation however fall under *The Economist's* bottom line, that of the rational versus the irrational, the objective against the subjective, the educated and the ignorant. This again returns to the paper's predilection with either/or alternatives and binary representations of politics more generally. In this way it can be seen to fall within a broader hegemonic discourse which uses these oppositional devices to perpetuate the status quo while at the same time defining it as progress and development.

Perhaps more important, and encouraging for critics of neoliberalism, is the way in which *The Economist* demonstrates a softening in the tone of neoliberal discourse on globalisation this could be merely coincidental rather than causal. Points of weakness and stress in the dominant discourses and structures of power can only be identified and worked upon through a continuous scrutiny and analysis of their forms and procedures.

Despite the marginal gains which may have been made, dissenting voices and activists would be advised to take note of the way in which their activity and identity is constructed through the multiple channels of neoliberal media. These movements should attempt to avoid essentialist

standpoints in order to develop and maintain more fluid subjectivities and remain open to hyphenated identities within which they may find themselves less vulnerable to such fixed external constructions. Such an approach places them in a strategically superior position to expose and undermine simplistic binary oppositions and linguistic fixings which frame and define the discursive parameters within which the articulation of normative democratic alternatives are rendered possible. Furthermore it can serve to identify and potentially widen the contradictory fissures inherent in dominant neoliberal discourses. Drawing on an array of post-positivist feminist literature on identity, Bleiker suggests that:

an exploration of the discursive struggles that surround the pluralistic nature of identity is the very precondition for human agency and for an adequate assessment of the processes through which its transformative potentials are unleashed. (2003:32)

Thus a rejection of static and objective foundations of identity for resistive agents is likely to make it far harder to objectify them and fix their meaning and significance as merely contingent upon dominant processes and discourses.

While the above exercise in CDA exposes both a number of interesting aspects of the social construction of alternative worldviews carried out in *The Economist's* reporting and its own broader role in the maintenance of late capitalist and neoliberal hegemony more generally, there are a number of caveats which I think are necessary in adopting a poststructuralist position on resistive agency.

Some readings of post-structural analyses appear to leave limited scope for the possibility of transformative human agency in global politics due to a scepticism of so-called 'grand narratives'. However, an appreciation of narrativity and discursivity in the relations between power and knowledge is vital for any politics of resistance. I do not suggest here that transformation is

imminent, or even foreseeable, merely that without such an appreciation of one of the key means by which power is maintained and exerted, it will be impossible.

Many have criticized post-structural and post-modern thinkers for their suggestion that 'there is nothing outside of discourse'. This is largely based on a (perhaps deliberate) misreading and subsequent misrepresentation of these works. What I have tried to suggest and hopefully demonstrate in the above chapter is that it is *meaning* which is constructed discursively, therefore it might not be overstating the case to say that things indeed have existence outside discourse but they have no meaning beyond it. It is vital that we attend to these meanings and the ways in which they emerge and shift in relation to events and processes in order to challenge their authority. Movements for global justice and those engaged in progressive and transformative politics more generally should be aware of the myriad discursive strategies employed by neoliberal discourse to represent both the world itself and the potential for transforming it.

This chapter has traced the emergence of neoliberal ideas from their foundations in the work of a handful of marginalised economists and commentators. It has described the way in which powerful actors seized on those ideas to transform the political and economic crises of capitalism of the 1970's into an opportunity to reshape western societies and then remould the rest of the world in their image. This normative project has now become a normalizing discourse in which alternatives are marginalised at best and often simply not considered at all. As a new crisis develops there is a dearth of alternative ideas which seem capable of challenging the neoliberal orthodoxy. This can be seen as at least partly a result of a specific aspect of that normalizing discourse which portrays resistance and opposition in a particularly negative way. The normalized nature of neoliberal ideology is ensured and entrenched largely due to the way it represents other alternative perspectives. The strategies employed in that process can be made visible through a critical discourse analysis. Such an analysis was applied to the business journal *The Economist*.

Ch. 8 Conclusion

This closing chapter will summarise the main points of the thesis which I have laid out above and attempt to draw some conclusions from that study. Before doing so, it is worth repeating the research questions which it attempted to address. How, and to what extent, does neoliberal ideology (ideas, beliefs, norms and discourses) constitute the processes, mechanisms and institutional arrangements of GEG? This broad question was also supplemented with two further related questions with a narrower focus: (1) How and from where did neoliberal ideology emerge as a normative discursive force and (2) How does the neoliberal discourse of *The Economist* reify, help to authorise and legitimate a particular conception and practice of GEG as inevitable and inexorable?

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate the crucial role that cultural and ideational factors play in politics and world history. More specifically it has argued that such factors are especially important in understanding processes of social change and institutional transformation. In making such a claim, the thesis suggests that the complex concept of ideology represents a particularly important tool with which to better understand such historical processes. Running within this discussion, an attempt has been made to address the essentially contested concept of power and the way in which theories of hegemony combine an analysis of the material and ideational in order to interpret the complex workings of power in society. The purpose of such an analysis is to help render power more 'visible' somehow. Although, of course, power could never be anything like fully visible or completely understood, there is a normative assumption in the thesis that it might be relatively so. It is normative because understanding more about the location, operation, legitimization and mystification of power, and how it is perceived, is vital for its democratic regulation and effective distribution. Obviously, we can never dispense with power, but it has been the problem *par excellence* of politics since time immemorial and democratic politics must, at least

in part, be about addressing and coming to the best terms possible with that problem. For such a democratic project then we need not only a material/institutional politics but also an intellectual politics. If ideas are as important as the above thesis suggests, then the dismantling of old ideas and the creation of new ones is a fundamental task for those engaged in the struggle for a more substantively democratic politics, from the local to the global.

I began the thesis with the important assertion that any study of global politics must refrain from treating the state as a unitary actor whose internal structures and institutions can be understood in isolation from the international/global historical context. As a result of this assertion it follows that all studies of the social/political must account for external human influences and forces. This is certainly not to say that all studies should be global in focus. Indeed, we may learn a lot about 'the global' from many different studies of 'the local', even more so if that is also our intention. The point is that however and wherever the study is focused, there are few solid boundaries in the social world and where they are asserted or erected we should ask where the power lies in drawing such divisions, be they intellectual, material or cultural. Adhering to boundaries without question can only artificially limit the scope of the analysis. The universal is constituted by the particular; the local is constituted by global; structure and agency are both necessary aspects of a mutually constitutive historical process which can only be conceived in terms of its complex contingency and not from reducing it to any one determining force or essential nature.

The thesis suggests that the combined intellectual resources of neo-Gramscian political economy and critical elements of socio-cultural constructivism are invaluable for a coherent understanding of both the contemporary world historical conjuncture and the events and processes which have led us here. These perspectives focus attention on a range of important considerations which are necessary in order to understand the transformation of political and economic institutions which took place in the second half of the 20th century. Neo-Gramscian perspectives draw attention to

the class structure which forms the basis for hegemonic struggles over the control of institutions and resources which determine the general framework of the global political economy and the states which comprise it. Indeed, it is the fundamentally interrelated nature of politics and economics recognised by neo-Gramscian perspectives that makes them such an important corrective to the mainstream separation of these fields in much of the mainstream literature on world politics. The role of ideology is also crucial for neo-Gramscians as a central element of the master concept of hegemony. Chapter four discussed the nature of ideology and the extent to which a given ideology can be said to be dominant in a particular time and space. It is recognised that no discussion of power can proceed very far without consideration of the role of ideas and ideology.

These neo-Gramscian perspectives have been enhanced by some elements of social constructivism but the very broad scope of that approach requires that we be more specific about which part of the wide spectrum of constructivism is being used. As chapter two showed, constructivism can be seen as a means by which the post-positivist accounts of world politics can engage with the positivist mainstream and thus move towards greater consensus regarding the nature of the ontological and epistemological subject matter. However, the danger of such a rapprochement is that the critical and normative element of IR/IPE is watered down in the process. A self-consciously critical constructivism sits more easily alongside the neo-Gramscian approach and sacrifices some mainstream engagement on the basis of 'scientific explanation' in order to maintain a sharper normative edge and to promote better understanding of the current world (dis)order and the means by which justice, security, sustainability and democracy might be enhanced.

This critical and post-positivist constructivism also permits a range of methods which do not fit with many mainstream assumptions about what constitutes social science. Drawing on Foucauldian and post-structuralist accounts, this form of constructivism embraces discursive and historical analyses

in order to interpret the ideas and processes by which some groups maintain power. Chapter six argued that a critical discourse analysis represents a particularly rich methodology by which to interrogate the history and discourse of late capitalism and neoliberalism. The inherently informational nature of contemporary capitalism requires an ever closer focus on the discursive elements of those phenomena. If we fail to attend to the discourses of late capitalism and neoliberalism as 'real' phenomena then we are in danger of ignoring some of its most important cultural aspects which are crucial for the maintenance of its hegemony.

The final chapter then draws on the theoretical claims and methodological resources in order to try and better understand how during the twentieth century, different forms of liberalism ebbed and flowed in the historical tide. This ebb and flow, I argue, must be seen in relation to the ideas and activities of a ruling class which has during the period in question extended and deepened its dominance as a result of its establishment as a fully transnational capitalist class comprising governments, financiers, industrialists and a handful of cultural elite groups comprising academics, journalists and other media executives. The chapter represents a case study of neoliberalism which forms two distinct elements. The first part traces the historical process by which neoliberal ideas became dominant during the closing decades of the twentieth century. It describes the emergence of neoliberal ideas in the chaotic crucible of interwar Europe and how certain individuals combined their notable talents in order to create a credible alternative to the tide of collectivism which they perceived to be threatening the liberal achievements of the nineteenth century. As such this represents an analysis of neoliberalism as a normative discourse where it sought to transform the existing institutional arrangements in favour of a more privatised, de-regulated, market driven society where the autonomy of the individual is held as the highest priority. It examines the key agents and organisations of this process and analyses the successful way in which the neoliberal moment was established during a period of widely perceived crisis when the institutions of embedded liberalism appeared weak and open to transformation.

The second part of the last chapter examines neoliberalism as a fully normalised discourse. Having achieved a cultural hegemony, its proponents and beneficiaries are well aware of the importance of discrediting and de-legitimizing alternative proposals and worldviews. This is demonstrated through a critical discourse analysis of *The Economist* and how that journal (mis)represents the agents which represent an obstacle or impediment to further deregulation, privatisation and market reform. Resistant governments and politicians, movements for global justice, ecological sustainability, and more substantive democratic forms and practices are among those which neoliberal discourse, exemplified by *The Economist*, marks out for such discursive denigration. I do not suggest that this discourse purely creates the reality of neoliberalism but that it represents a compelling case study of how discourse plays a highly significant role in the constitution of that reality. Moreover, an examination of the prevailing values and norms of society is possible through the critical analysis of mainstream discourses. Recognising the relationship between power and discourse is crucial for understanding the social relations and institutional arrangements of a given situation. As a result, constructing coherent alternative and resistive discourses represents a vital strategy for progressive counter-hegemonic political movements to resist the neoliberal order and to pave the way for new pragmatic forms of democratic governance. In Gramsci's terms, the war of position must be fought before the war of manoeuvre can begin. A good deal can be learned from the lessons of neoliberalism's meteoric rise from the marginalised theories of a few 'crackpots' to becoming accepted as the sole feasible alternative to a perceived crisis of the prevailing framework of world order.

From this study we can conclude that ideas represent a highly significant factor in understanding the processes by which one institutional framework breaks down and another emerges. This does not simply take place 'out there' in the observable world of organisations, groups, states, institutions, policies etcetera. Just as important are the transformations in people's minds. The transition in the popular consciousness or conventional wisdom, what Gramsci referred to as the

'sense held in common', the intersubjective values, beliefs, norms and priorities which people hold to be 'true' in a given era are a crucial determining factor in terms of the arrangements by which society distributes and these ideational factors can be observed in the dominant discourses and prevailing representations of the era.

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